

A SPLENDID SERIAL COMMENCES IN THIS NUMBER.

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[PRICE ONE PENNY.]



"SO YOU ARE REALLY GOING TO-MORROW?" ROY ASKED, DISCONSOLATELY.

A ROSE OF MAY.

[A NOVELETTE.]

CHAPTER I.

THE wanderer had returned to his home, but there was no gladness on his face, no gladness in his heart! Why should there be!

Sixteen years ago he had gone into voluntary exile; sixteen years ago he had turned his back upon his native land, a ruined and outraged man.

As he stood in the highway looking beyond park and meadow to the dull grey walls of The Manor, his brow contracted, and his eyes grew more sombre as he thought of the day on which he passed out of the huge gates, mad with misery and dishonour.

Only the morning before he had risen full of glad, exultant life, believing himself the happiest man under the sun.

He had spent the long hours with his beautiful wife and his dearest friend, and had planned pleasant excursions for the remainder of the former's stay at The Manor.

The next day he found himself ruined by the man for whom he had stood bond—betrayed by the wife he had loved with all the passionate fervour of a strong nature.

They had flown together, she taking all her jewels and as much gold as she could find in his desk.

He had followed them, intent upon revenge, but the false wife escaped him in a tragic way. She was climbing the Alps with her paramour when her foot slipped, or she turned giddy—no one seemed rightly to know which—and she fell over a terrible precipice, and her body was never recovered.

Ludwig Hargrave, too, eluded the wronged husband, and no one knew where he had hidden himself.

For sixteen years Rolf Strong had wandered whither his melancholy fancy listed, heedless

of the duties waiting him in England, afraid to remember that the little child of two, who had bidden him a tearful good-bye, was growing nearer to womanhood with each passing year.

Often and often, thinking of the old adage, "Like mother, like daughter," he wished her dead!

Then, again, he would pray that she might not fulfil the promise of beauty she had given when a child. Her mother's beauty had been her ruin.

He scarcely ever wrote, never unless it was absolutely necessary, and he never encouraged the girl to correspond with him, so that father and child were as very strangers each to the other.

She was eighteen now, and it was necessary that she should have a protector, stronger and abler than poor little Miss Rance, her governess, who had clung to her, loved her for her father's sake.

How changed the old place was! The park

pathways were broken in sundry places, the hedges ragged and untrimmed!

A few deer were visible, and they came cautiously to look at the man who stood by the iron gates, fighting with his deadly anguish.

They did not recognise him, although once they had answered his call as readily as his favourite hound.

He laughed loudly and bitterly, and the startled deer fled across the park at topmost speed.

He pushed open the heavy gates and entered. How quiet the place was! Scarcely even a bird's song stirred the heavy silence!

Rolf Strong strode on his way, wondering how his daughter would receive him, and what charges he would find in the old home.

The grass grew long and thick up the broad drive, and where myriads of flowers had once bloomed he saw only weeds. The man's great heart began to fall him.

No one came to the hall-door to welcome him, no one saw him, there was no sign of life about the place.

A honeysuckle hung its long tendrils over the porch, so low that one must brush them aside if one would enter; an unpruned magnolia almost hid the windows from view.

Evidently it was long since a foot had crossed the threshold, for the moss grew soft and green upon the steps.

Groaning, the man rang the bell. How the shrill peal echoed through the silent passages! And as he waited he heard slow steps approaching, then a woman's voice bidding some one open the door quickly, next the sound of bolts withdrawn, and then the door was cautiously opened by an old servant-man, behind whom stood a woman wearing a frilled cap. The latter hung up her hands at seeing Rolf.

"Oh, thank Heaven!" she cried. "My prayers are heard, master, and you have come at last!"

The master was touched more than he cared to show by the simple, genuine joy the old couple displayed at his return, and—perhaps to cover his emotion—said, brusquely,—

"Do you always live at the back of the house?"

"Yes," answered Mrs. Mead, apologetically. "You see there's no one but Mead and me to keep the place tidy."

And she would have broken out into rapturous exclamations once more had not a little elderly lady appeared on the scene.

She must have been pretty once, and even now her face had a delicate bloom like a young girl's; but it faded when she saw the dark-bearded man standing in the hall, and she tried vainly to speak or move.

Mr. Strong went forward, and took her trembling hands in his kindly.

"Haven't you a word of welcome for me, Miss Rance?"

Tears came into the faded but still pretty eyes.

"Oh!" she said, with quivering lips, "how glad I am! How glad Yolande will be!"

At his daughter's name he frowned, and turned aside.

"Where is she?" he asked, coldly.

"In the rovery. Let me run and prepare her to meet you."

"No, no! I would see her in a natural mood. I do not wish her to have leisure to frame any pretty speeches. I will take her by surprise. Tell me, has she grown like her mother?"

"She is like, and yet unlike; and distinctly different in ways and heart."

"Thank Heaven for that, although I am afraid, you guileless soul, you are not a very good judge of character. And I suppose Yolande has never been exposed to temptation of any kind?"

"Beyond an occasional walk through the village, and the Sunday services, she has seen nothing of life. We never have a visitor, and she has no companions."

"Humph! There as yet her virtues only are apparent, her vices sleep. There, I did not mean to hurt you. Oh, you have turned the old library into a general living room! Thanks, no;

I will not wait for any refreshment. I am going to find my daughter."

He passed out of the French window, and walked through the neglected but fragrant gardens, until he came to the confines of the rovery.

Many of his favourite bushes were long since dead, but there was still a profusion of blooms, or would be in a week or two.

Brambles trailed along the ripe, tall grass, and many brilliant-hued buds peeped up from their green bed.

Here and there a discoloured statue gleamed through the mass of foliage, and the tinkling of a fountain made pleasant music close by.

Here he had been wont to walk with his young wife, for whom he planned all good and beautiful things; and here, through swaying branches, he saw her child and his coming towards him, but wholly unconscious of his presence.

She was walking slowly, her head bent over a small volume, her eyes intent upon its pages; and the man drew a sharp breath as he watched her.

Taller than her mother, and with a nobler beauty than she had ever possessed, and yet sufficiently like the dead woman to be recognised as her daughter.

She wore an old-fashioned gown of *de laine*, with sprigs of roses and forget-me-nots about it—(he remembered the morning his wife had first appeared in it). It was short in the skirt and somewhat scanty, and the sleeves displayed the white, slender wrists liberally.

Her head was uncovered, and the sun turned her bright brown hair into a golden crown.

She was fair and sweet enough to win his heart, and yet he felt no love for her.

"Yolande," he said, in a low, deep voice, and the girl started violently, "Yolande, do you know me?"

She began to tremble and grew very white as he advanced and offered his hand; then, with a sudden gesture, she threw her arms about his neck.

"Father, father!" she said, and her lovely face was instinct with rapture, her beautiful brown eyes full of happy tears. "You will stay with me now—always! Oh, the time has been sad without you!" and she threw back her head the better to look into his face.

With gentle coldness he unclosed her slender, clinging hands, and, holding her at arm's length, looked earnestly into her eyes.

"I wonder," he said, "if you are as good as you are beautiful?"

She shrank a little from him, chilled by his manner. She had expected to receive passionate embraces, to listen to loving words. The beautiful mouth quivered, and her colour came and went fitfully.

"Father!" she said, scarcely above a whisper, "are you not glad to see me, or have you stayed so long away you do not love me? Oh! if you knew how often I have pictured your home-coming, what grand dreams I have dreamed of, how we would spend our days together—"

He interrupted her with a harsh laugh.

"What a home-coming! The grass grows in the drive where once friends came by scores; the house is a ruin, my fortune is at the lowest ebb, and there is no one to welcome me."

"Save Yolande," she said, in a low, unsteady voice. "Oh, my dear! I know how you have suffered! I know how bitterly you have mourned my mother; but surely you will let me be some help, some comfort to you!"

"What do you know of your mother?" he questioned, with averted eyes.

"Ah! so little; nothing but that she died young, that she was beautiful, and you loved her as your life!"

Mr. Strong groaned in the bitterness of his heart, and once more the girl ventured to lay her hand upon his arm.

"Often and often," she said, wistfully, "I have longed to hear all her story, but neither Mead nor Miss Rance will tell me anything; they shake their heads and say, 'It is a painful subject; her loss broke your father's heart.'"

"And this is all you know! You have never heard how she died!"

"No; and day after day I sit before her picture and wonder if all would have been different if she had lived. Oh! I wish I could remember her, how she looked and spoke."

The man beside her winced; then said, hoarsely,—

"It is as well you should remain in ignorance."

"You mean because to hear all would sadden me?" she questioned, lifting her eyes to his haggard, dark face. "You have all been so thoughtful for me, but I do not think it wise to keep all sorrow or shadow of sorrow from me."

He regarded her with a sort of surprise. It was not thus her mother would have spoken; she was fretful if her pleasure were spoiled but for a day; and he said, in a gentler tone than he had yet used,—

"Be happy while you may, Yolande; there is sorrow in store for all. You cannot hope to escape the common lot. Is your life pleasant here?"

"In the summer, yes; and now that you have come I shall have nothing to wish for."

"But in the winter, Yolande! You are anxious to leave Stowe?"

"Yes. I should like to see something of the world. Are you angry?" as he frowned upon her. "Is it not natural! I am so young, and I have no companions."

"Yes, it is natural," coldly, and added, *sotto voce*, "you are your mother's daughter."

"Father!" the sweet young voice was very wistful, the beautiful tawny brown eyes were suspiciously moist. "Do you know you have not kissed me yet?"

He turned from her half in anger, half in pain—her voice had sounded so like her mother's—and strode towards the house, leaving her alone.

She did not attempt to follow him, but she watched him through her blinding tears, and with hands fast locked. In her heart she wondered why he should hate her, and prayed passionately that she might find some way to turn his love towards her.

Then she went back to the house, and found her way to the study. It presented a striking contrast to all the other unused rooms, for it had been Yolande's special care and delight to keep it bright for "father's coming."

There were flowers in the windows, little dainty neck-nacks tastefully arranged, and not a speck of dust visible in any corner or crevice. Over the mantelpiece hung the portrait of a young and beautiful woman, richly dressed, and wearing blood-red rubies in her hair. Yolande went forward, and kneeling on a chair, looked into the fair, sensuous face with eyes full of love and longing.

"Oh, mother! oh, my mother! Why did you leave me lonely! And why, if he so loved you, should he hate your child! Oh, teach me how to win his heart, how to make his sad life happy; and suddenly she bowed her face upon her hands, and wept passionately.

Rolf Strong, standing in the doorway, listening to his daughter's pathetic appeal, felt softened towards her; and obeying his more generous impulse, advanced to her. She heard his step, and started erect. He saw her face was disfigured with tears, that, despite her efforts to regain her self-control, she was terribly agitated.

"Will you forgive me, child?" he said, tenderly; "I am a strange, unloving fellow, but you must try to bear with me, and rub off some of my angles," and, stooping, he kissed the tremulous mouth.

It seemed to her her prayer was already answered, and her gratitude made her speechless. She clung about him with tender hands as though, having found him, she could never let him go.

He drew her gently from the room, and she noticed that he never glanced at his wife's portrait, and wondered at the strangeness of men's grief.

"I, too, have lost her," she thought, "but I

love to look on her beautiful face; it seems to bring her near."

She would have been considerably surprised and grieved had she known that, as midnight, when all others were sleeping, he stole to the study, and holding his candle high, gazed into the dead woman's face, with love and reproach struggling for mastery in his eyes.

"Alley! Alley!" he muttered, hoarsely, "I wish you had died before you wrought the child this wrong. Oh! What a bitter dower you have given her! Woman, I wish I had killed you before the world knew your shame."

He lifted his hand as though he would strike the fair and smiling face; then, with a bitter groan, he turned away and crept up to his solitary room. It was long before he slept, and through all his dreams he saw Alley, and always she came between Yolande and happiness.

CHAPTER II.

BUT Yolande found it very hard to win her father's love. He was harsh and stern in his manner towards her, and regarded all her ways and words with a suspicion she could not understand, and she would ask no questions of Miss Rance or Mead, lest they should think she accused him unjustly.

She was very sad in those early days, so sad that at times she would kneel before her mother's picture and pray her wildly to take her away. She was too innocent to guess that, day by day, her father's heart was yearning towards her, and only pride and fear that she, too, would deceive him made his manner so constrained.

Sometimes she walked with him in the park or garden. They scarcely ever crossed the boundary of his estate, but Yolande never complained; she seemed content with her books and his society. Then, too, she found endless amusement and pleasure with the old piano bought so long ago for her mother.

Mr. Strong watched her with surprise and growing love; it hurt him cruelly that all her life should be buried in the old Manor. It must not—it should not be. He would exert himself to make her days brighter, to bring some gleam of pleasure to her.

He was very watchful of her. In secret he had overhauled her little library, consulting wholly of books borrowed from the study. He found a Shakespeare among them, a Milton and Longfellow, volumes of Carlyle's, Dickens's and Spencer's works, but nothing that could offend his taste, and he prayed with all his heart—

"Heaven keep her pure!"

In the first few days following his return he noticed Miss Rance was busily employed making point lace, which she always hurried out of sight at Yolande's approach, and he asked in an amused way what was the mystery!

Little Miss Rance regarded him reproachfully. "Don't you know? Why the thirty-first is Yolande's birthday; and I am working the lace for her."

"Oh! what use will it be in a place like Stowe—where she sees no one!"

"She won't always live at Stowe," promptly; "it is a sin to keep her buried here."

"Do you want her to go the same way her mother went?" he lamented sternly.

"No," and the little lady met his regard undistichingly, although her heart was throbbing most uncomfortably at her own temerity. "But I maintain you are doing your daughter a cruel wrong in keeping her so secluded. If she had been in the habit of going abroad her mother's story would be well-nigh forgotten now; as it is, her first appearance in society will revive it in all its hidden details."

"And you, who love her, would advise me to subject her to bitter pain and humiliation?"

"Who would be so base as to tell her the truth? And I am anxious to see her comfortably settled, knowing what slender provision you can make for her. Mr. Strong, assert yourself.

Go into society, live down your shame! Don't run away from it as cowards do."

The little woman's eyes kindled, and the gentle face flashed ruddily. Rolf Strong looked at her in amazement.

"I believe you are right. But if Yolande ever learns the truth!"

"Her love for you would help her to bear it," Miss Rance said, with conviction.

He was silent a moment, then said, "I have news for you. I have been striving to obtain employment since my return to England, and at last I have succeeded. I have secured the post of secretary to Lord Ringrove, the Tory whip, and enter on my duties next week. I have also advertised the Manor, and hope I have found a suitable tenant. I shall know by to-morrow's post."

"Oh! I am glad to hear of your success; but it will be an awful wrench to leave this dear old place! Where are we going—for I am to flit with you!" she questioned anxiously.

"That goes without saying. I have not so many friends that I can afford to lose the truest of them all," he answered, with some emotion.

"I have written to Elsie Marriott, my cousin, and Yolande's godmother, asking if she can recommend a small and suitable house. So you see both you and the child will be plunged at once into all sorts of gaieties. I want to see how she will comport herself under such strange circumstances."

"With the same sweetness that she has shown all through her life."

"I am afraid," he began in his ordinary cynical tone; but Miss Rance interrupted him indignantly.

"If you doubt your daughter, why do you carry her where you hint temptation waits her? Rolf Strong, you ought to be ashamed of your suspicions. They are unworthy any Christian gentleman."

He laughed. It was such a new experience to see Miss Rance angry; and then, when he realised she was deeply hurt, he possessed himself of the little, busy, fluttering hands, and said, gently,—

"Forgive me, I was wrong to play upon your affection in such fashion. I will endeavour not to offend again. And now I have taken you into my confidence, and I am sure you will not betray it. I wish Yolande to remain in ignorance of my movements until all is settled."

"You shall be obeyed implicitly," delighted at the trust reposed in her; "and now what are you going to give Yolande to-morrow?"

"I have no gift of any worth to offer. I shall simply ignore her birthday."

"She will feel it keenly if you do. There is that old gold bracelet you found after—"

"After my wife's flight," he supplemented, coldly. "Shall I offer my child a bauble too poor to excite her mother's cupidity? No!" passionately. "She shall, in future, wear nothing that wretched woman discarded, or left behind in her hurry," and he went out of the room frowning heavily.

So the next day Yolande waited vainly for his good wishes, and the sight of all the yards of filmy lace her governess had wrought for her only brought tears to her eyes, recalling vividly, as it did, her father's apparent neglect.

At night she crept close to him as they sat together in the darkening room.

"Have you forgotten this is my birthday?" she said, a little uncertainly.

The wistful tone touched him; but he said quietly, "Did you expect a gift?"

"No, dear; but I thought—I thought you would remember to wish me many happy returns. It is the first birthday we have spent together."

She ceased suddenly, and he felt rather than saw that her eyes were filled with bitter tears.

He drew her to him and kissed her tenderly. "It is not too late to offer you good wishes now. I have nothing else to give."

But she was satisfied.

The following day Mr. Strong received two letters; one from the eligible tenant, who wished to take immediate possession of the Manor for a

term of three years, and at a liberal rent; the other from Mrs. Marriott, his widowed cousin; and a leader of fashion. The last letter read thus:—

"MY DEAR ROLF,—

"I shall never forgive you that you have not paid me so much as a flying visit since your return. Considering our close relationship, and the years we spent together when children, I think you have treated me very shabbily."

"However, I am not going to scold you; that would, indeed, be a sorry way of welcoming you back. You cannot think how delighted I am you have secured that secretaryship. Lord Ringrove is my personal friend, and a very good sort of fellow; and you are wise to let the Manor. It is the only way in which you can recoup your losses, and secure the estate for your descendants."

"But when you speak of taking a house here for a matter of two months you are demented. What have I ever done that you should doubt my affection? 'Nothing,' you say."

"Well, then, for the present, let my home be yours. You and Yolande, with that dear, unselfish soul, Ada Rance, shall pay me a visit, and at the end of the season it will be time enough to secure a home elsewhere, besides which I can introduce my god-daughter to society."

"You tell me she is beautiful, and beauty is a great power; but I am afraid her mother's sin will spoil her chance of matrimony."

"Excuse me that I speak plainly, and that I advise you to enlighten her ignorance at once. In time she will grow used to the idea, and will know how to meet it."

"Poor child! She has been sadly neglected, and I blame myself very much for this. Let me do my best now to atone for my sin."

"With love to her and to you,

"Believe me, yours,

"ELSIE MARRIOTT."

"P.S.—(The ladies' usual, you see.) Don't trouble about Yolande's outfit. I shall provide that; it is my duty and my privilege."

Mr. Strong went in search of his daughter, to whom he imparted his news, only keeping back her mother's story.

She listened in silence, and he was glad to see she did not appear overjoyed at the idea of leaving Stowe.

Now the actual parting with her dear old home was so near she was rather saddened than otherwise, and went about touching this or that thing with gentle hands.

The new tenant had decided to accept the services of Mead as lodgekeeper; and although he and his wife hated the idea of performing any duties for the "interloper," as they called him, Miss Rance quickly persuaded them it was for the best, and bade them look forward to the day when the "Master" should return prosperous and happy to his home.

It was a sunny afternoon, early in June, when Mrs. Marriott walked to and fro in her boudoir, as restless as a caged tiger.

"I hope," so ran the lady's meditations, "I hope the girl is a prude; for at the least hint of frivolity in her (however innocent), people will revive the past to her hurt. Poor child! I could almost wish her dead."

"Mr. Amory!" announced a servant, and as Mrs. Marriott turned a young fellow of handsome, debonaire appearance, lounged into the pretty apartment.

"You, Roy! Sit down and let me give you a cup of tea."

"Thank you; that is exactly what I came for," and he sank with an air of exhaustion into the easiest chair he could find. "This is better than roasting in the Row," he said, turning a pair of bright blue eyes upon his hostess. "By the way, why is it I find you alone to-day?"

"I am waiting the arrival of my guests. I told you, did I not, that I expected my cousin, his daughter, and her governess to-day?"

"I believe you did. But I forgot all about them, or I would not have intruded," Mrs. Marriott laughed.

"I like to have you here, and pray stay with me until the ordeal of meeting them is over. You see, it is sixteen years since Rolf and I met, and the girl I have never seen since her christening."

"How awful to reflect on your neglect," the young fellow said, with a comical look, and ran his fingers through his yellow hair, which was soft and pretty enough to adorn a woman's head. "Well, I'll take compassion on you and stay. And what is the god-daughter's name?"

"Yolande; it is uncommon."

"Uncommonly lovely! She ought to have a face like an angel to match her name."

"She will probably disappoint you."

"Oh, without doubt. I know a girl named Lily, and she bears as much resemblance to that flower as I do to Hercules. She has cheeks the colour of peonies, and hair so deeply and unmistakably red that a bull would take fright at it on first sight—and she is freckled so terribly that you cannot tell what her skin originally was like!"

"You are very severe; but probably when her parents named her they were dwelling upon her resemblance to the Tiger Lily!"

"Who is severe now, I would like to know!" laughing. Then, after a pause, "Miss Strong's mother died young, did she not? I think I've heard the governor say so."

"Yes, she died when Yolande was a mere baby," answered Mrs. Marriott, with averted face.

"Strong cut up awfully rough about his wife's death, didn't he? Bolted from England, and did not turn up for years."

"He returned about three weeks ago."

The noise of carriage-wheels attracted Roy's attention. Turning his head, he said,—

"Your visitors are already here, so I will make myself scarce."

"Oh, no! Pray stay. Excuse me, I will be with you again in a few moments," and she hurried away to welcome her guests.

Roy stood at the window, and saw first a tall, sombre-looking man step out and give his hand to a little, elderly lady; then a young girl, somewhat above the medium height, and with her hands full of the once famous roses of Stowe. Two shadows falling across her face made "dusky the great amber eyes," and as he looked at her the young man fairly caught his breath with surprise and delight at her beauty.

She stood a moment as though bewildered by her new surroundings; then, with a slow, sweet smile, she followed her father and his companion into the house.

A little later Mrs. Marriott joined Roy Amory.

"You saw her, Roy?"

"Yes," he answered, absently. "She is the loveliest creature I have ever seen!"

"And her name suits her admirably, eh? Her voice, too, is as perfect as her face. Now, I must run away. She has no maid, and mine is so stupid. Will you dine with us to-morrow?"

"I shall be glad," he answered, with so much eagerness that she smiled; but when he was gone she went slowly and thoughtfully up to Yolande's room.

"He is quite prepared to fall in love with her; but the question is, would Sir John consent to a marriage between them? Poor child! I am afraid not all her beauty will bring her happiness."

As she entered, Yolande was brushing out the long masses of shining hair, and she turned with a smile to Mrs. Marriott.

"It seems, cousin, we have taken you quite by storm, but I was glad to come. I wished to know one who has been so uniformly kind to my dear father."

Elsie Marriott took the pure, sweet face between her hands, and looked earnestly into the grand, calm eyes.

"I hope you will be very happy here," she said, gently. "I hope you will learn to love me very dearly!"

"I think I do that already," simply; "and I am sure I shall be happy with you."

CHAPTER III.

THE next day Mr. Strong put a cheque for twenty pounds in Mrs. Marriott's hand.

"Do the best you can with it, Elsie. I cannot afford more. You must buy inexpensive goods, as the child's wardrobe is of the scantiest."

"I wish you were less independent; but you will hardly deny me the pleasure and privilege of adding to a little!"

"You are very kind, but don't spoil Yolande for her future life."

"By the way, Rolf, what do you think of Roy Amory?"

"He seems a nice lad, but he isn't in the least like his father."

"No, Sir John is a bit of a prig," laughing. "Roy wouldn't be a bad husband for Yolande. He is young, handsome, and will be rich!"

"Elsie! Elsie! What an inveterate match-maker you are! Do you suppose," sadly, "a man like John Amory would consent to a marriage between his only son and my poor little girl?"

Mrs. Marriott was silent. She, too, had fears for Yolande, but she would not confess this, and after awhile she said,—

"The girl is so beautiful, so winning in ways and speech, that she can woo any man to espouse her cause."

"So could her mother; and that may be counted rather against than for her."

On the next Tuesday Yolande dressed for her first ball. She was very calm outwardly, but her heart throbbed with excitement, and a faint dread at the prospect of meeting many strangers.

"I hope I shall acquit myself decently," she said to Miss Rance, who was assisting her with her toilet. "How different it will be dancing in a crowded room to our mild exercise at home. I'm afraid I shall utterly break down in the quadrille, and as for the Lancers—well, I must sit them out."

"Oh! a good partner will help you through, and you will quickly learn all you need. Oh! my dear, how beautiful you look!" clasping her hands in ecstasy.

Yolande flushed slightly as she regarded her reflection in the pier-glass, and smiling at her companion's delight prepared to leave the room, when a maid appeared bearing a beautiful bouquet of stephanotis, in the centre of which burned a vivid crimson rose.

"From my father!" she said, in a tender tone, but the maid answered, quickly,—

"I beg your pardon, miss; no. Mr. Amory's servant brought them."

The blush on the sweet young face deepened. She had seen Roy very often since she came to town, and could not be blind to his growing interest in her. She trembled with a new, strange pleasure, and the grand eyes grew almost tender as they rested on the beautiful blossoms she carried. There was a tiny slip of paper placed between the outer row and the lace surrounding it.

"With best wishes, R. A."

Miss Rance had preceded her, and now she detached the slip of paper and placed it in her desk, then went slowly downstairs to meet her father and Mrs. Marriott.

The former looked at her in astonishment; she was so lovely in her new guise. It is not true that "beauty unadorned is adorned the most." A pretty woman grows positively lovely when tastefully dressed, and a plain one almost pretty.

She wore no ornaments, and seen thus was a beautiful type of the English girl as she should be, but as unfortunately she is not often.

"Shall I pass muster, father?" she asked, with a smile.

"You are looking very well, my dear!" and he led her to the carriage.

They reached Mrs. Perrin's in a few moments, and that pleasant little lady welcomed them cordially.

"I am proud to think you will make your debut at my house," she said to Yolande, and

added with a smile, "Here is Mr. Amory; he has been waiting near the door from the moment he arrived."

She passed on to meet other guests, and Roy advanced a little diffidently. He spoke a few words to Mrs. Marriott and Mr. Strong, then gave his arm to Yolande.

"Thank you so much for carrying my flowers," he said, in a low tone.

"They are very beautiful, Mr. Amory, and I cannot tell you how proud I am of them," she answered, quietly, and the grand calm eyes met his a moment, and then she looked around at the gaily-dressed women and their laughing chatting partners.

She blushed brightly as curious eyes were turned on her, and thought that Mayfair manners were scarcely in advance of country ways. She did not know that folks were saying amongst themselves,—

"That woman's daughter! Great heavens, what is Mrs. Marriott about! Lovely, yes, but she will never make any sensation—her parentage is too well known."

"Let me see your tablets," Roy was saying, and she gave the little pink and silver arrangement into his hand.

"You will let me take this value," he said, with an air of conviction. "I'm not going to be put off with quadrilles and those sort of things."

"Oh," she answered, with a comical little moue, "I hoped you would ask only for them; I am so ignorant of them."

"Then I'll sacrifice myself and ask for one; the rest we'll sit out together."

"I am afraid that would not do," she said, simply, and he was obliged to agree with her decision, knowing that Mrs. Grundy must not be outraged.

Yolande's tablets were very quickly filled, and as she floated round with this or that partner men turned to watch the little, beautiful figure, the superb face lit up by those grand, wonderful eyes.

"What a pity her mother made such a slip," said a gentleman to his partner.

"She was a dreadful woman! I wonder the girl has the audacity to appear in select society."

"Perhaps she does not know the story! And, after all, Mr. Strong was no worse than a great many others who live and die in the odour of sanctity."

The lady was silenced, but she, in common with others, watched Yolande jealously, trying to find some flaw in her conduct, but failed; for ignorant as she was of the world she had all the instincts of a gentlewoman, and was not likely to shock the most fastidious taste.

After their valise Roy led her away to the conservatory, where he chose the most secluded seat, and determined to have "five minutes bliss" before returning to "that Babel!"

He sat down beside her, his fair young face eager and flushed, his blue eyes bright with passion, for already the boy told himself he loved Yolande, and would have no other woman for his wife. He was of age and competent to choose for himself, he said, and Sir John must be proud and pleased with his choice.

"You are having a good time!" he said, bending over the girl in a loverlike way.

"Oh, yes! but the men are so stupid; they talk such nonsense, pay such fulsome compliments that once or twice I have been very angry."

"And snubbed them for their pains!" laughing gleefully. "Good girl! Go on snubbing, and I shall soon have you all to myself. At the risk of being called stupid I must tell you you are far and away the loveliest girl here to-night!"

A faint pink stole over her throat and face, and she averted her head. He noticed, too, the slender hands resting on her lap trembled slightly.

"Yolande! I may call you Yolande!—at least when we are alone. You don't know how happy you have made me to-night!"

She rose suddenly; afraid of the wild joy stirring her heart.

"Do you think we ought to stay here?" she

asked, hurriedly. "I am so ignorant of your ways."

"Oh! it's all right," contentedly. "Pray don't go yet. I've something to tell you. If you lived to be a hundred years old and were always fair you could never have a prettier compliment paid you than that little speech of Hawley's I overheard. Aren't you curious?"

"Just a little," smiling. "Please don't keep me in suspense!"

"Well, it was just as that big guardsman was taking you back to Mrs. Marriott. The fellow with Hawley said, 'Miss Strong is undoubtedly the loveliest girl here. She reminds me of a picture I once saw of Ophelia.' 'I think I know it,' Hawley answered. 'Yes, she is a veritable 'Rose of May.' Then I moved off. Now confess you are elated."

"I like to please," she answered, simply, "but it is not nice to be discussed so freely."

"Oh! most girls like it. Perhaps you won't mind so much when you are more used to society, although I hope I shall never see any change in you."

"I have come to claim my dance, Miss Strong," said a manly voice, and Yolande found herself led away by the "big guardsman," much to Roy's chagrin.

After that night she was seen everywhere; in the Row, at theatre, concert, garden party, at ball and soiree, until men grew to watch for her coming, and she had a little court of admirers wherever she went.

But she was unchanged; she never seemed elated or flattered by their attentions or pretty speeches. The grand, calm eyes never grew tender as she listened; her face did not take one added shade of colour, unless, indeed, the man was Roy Amory.

She was not without lovers; had she chosen she could have worn the strawberry leaves, but the suitor was old and vicious, and she shrank from him with loathing.

Her father, watching, loved her more dearly as the summer days sped by, and Mrs. Marriott had but one complaint to make,—

"She was too cold, too unconscious of her power."

It was July, and so sultry that Mrs. Marriott had forewarned the usual drive, much to Yolande's pleasure. There was a beautiful garden attached to her cousin's house, shut out from curious eyes by a high stone wall, and here Yolande proposed to spend the long afternoon. She was sitting under some elms in a rocking chair, pretending to read, when Roy entered the garden from behind her; she heard his step, and slightly turned her head.

"So you have braved the heat, run the risk of a sunstroke, merely to say good-bye to me!" she said, quietly.

The young man flung himself down on the grass at her feet.

"So you are really going to-morrow!" he asked, disconsolately. "I think it is awfully selfish of Mr. Strong to insist on carrying you to Redcroft."

"You forget," gently, "that duty takes him there, and where he goes I go too."

"But you can't always do that," eagerly. "You'll be getting married one day, and will have to stay at home with your husband."

"I will wait until such a time comes before I give the matter much thought," she answered, laughing and blushing.

"By Jove! you had better think of it at once, Yolande!" he cried, boyishly. "It isn't likely the Rose of May will be left long ungathered."

She sat silent, and he noticed she had grown pale. He reached up and possessed himself of her hands.

"Yolande," he said, in a queer, uncertain voice, "don't you know I love you! Haven't I been your shadow since the day we first met! Oh! my dear, my queen! I haven't half as much as some fellows to offer you; but I can give you all my love, all my heart, and I think, I am sure, I could make you happy. What will you say to me, sweetheart?"

He leaned his cheek upon her trembling hands and waited, breathless, for her answer.

"You have not known me long," she breathed rather than said, "and I am very poor."

He laughed out joyously.

"I have enough for both, Yolande. What other objection have you to me? Can't you say, 'I love you a little, Roy!'"

"No, for that would not be true. I love you with all my heart," and then she was caught close, and his lips were laid passionately upon hers, his arms held her fast.

Speech was impossible in those first few moments of joy. She simply lay in his embrace, scarcely breathing, scarcely thinking, because her heart was so stirred with love for him.

Roy was the first to recover his composure.

"I guess I shall soon follow you to Redcroft," he said, fixating his eyes on her dainty beauty.

"Oh, my sweetheart! my queen! was ever a fellow so happy as I! Of course I shall tell Mr. Strong at the earliest opportunity, and then I must see the governor, and beg for an early marriage."

She interrupted him.

"We are both so young—we can wait."

"There's nothing like taking time by the forelock," joyously, "and marriage steadies a fellow wonderfully. I shall be a model husband."

The beautiful tender eyes which met his were full of love and joy, and he could not guess that after to-day the sunlight would leave her face, the deep content die out of her voice; that soon they would be parted for weary weeks and months. The years before him seemed so glad and fair, and youth is ever hopeful.

They sat in the garden until Mrs. Marriott summoned them to five o'clock tea, and then there was such a marked change in their demeanour that the astute lady guessed the truth.

"I shall call on Mr. Strong to-night," he said at parting.

"Very well, Roy. I hope, dear, your father will approve."

CHAPTER IV.

THAT night Roy was closeted for a long time with Mr. Strong, and when he left the study in search of Yolande his face was very pale and grave, for he had been listening to the story of Allyn Strong's sin, and there was a great dread in his heart that Sir John would refuse to sanction his engagement.

Mr. Strong had been very kind in his manner, but he had said firmly,—

"Until your father has consented to your wishes, you must consider Yolande free. I will not do for you to displease him; the estates are not entailed, and you are absolutely penniless if he chooses."

"I know," moodily; "but you might tell me to hope, and if the worst comes, why, I can earn my own livelihood in some fashion."

"My boy," very kindly, "you are so young as scarcely to know your own wishes, and much as you love Yolande now, the day would come when you would repent the sacrifice you made for her. Neither will I have her enter a family where she is not welcome. There, say no more, this has been a trying interview to me; but I would not have you marry Yolande in ignorance of the fact, even if that were possible."

So, sick at heart, with the dread of losing his "Rose of May," Roy went out.

He knew he should find her in the garden; he caught the faint glimmer of light robes, heard the sweet voice softly singing,—

What are we waiting for, O my heart!
Kiss me straight on the brows and part.
Again, again—my heart! my heart!
What are we waiting for, you and I
A pleading look, a stifled cry,
Good-bye for ever, good-bye, good-bye.

He wished she had been singing any song save this; it seemed to his distraught mind a confirmation of his fears, and an omen of ill. He called her name softly, and she, turning swiftly, came forward with outstretched hand.

Her eyes were radiant, and she had never been so beautiful, so dear as now, when he feared to lose her.

He drew her close to his side.

"You don't ask me for my news, sweetheart!" he said, and, struck by the gravity of his voice, she said, quickly and tremulously,—

"Is father angry—has he denied you your wish?"

"No, he has consented, on condition that my father does the same."

"And you think he will not!" with a woman's quick intuition. "Is that it, Roy! I know I am poor, but at least my birth is as good as your own, and there is no stain upon our name."

His heart ached for her, as she spoke so proudly, with head erect, and flashing eyes.

"Why should Sir John refuse?"

"My darling! it was your father's idea, not mine; and it is as well to be prepared."

She was not infected by his fear. It seemed so unfounded to her in her ignorance, and she asked quite calmly,—

"Supposing Sir John should object, what would you do?"

"Give up all, if need were, for you, my darling! Do you think that, having won you, I would ever let you go? I am young and strong, and should be proud and glad to work for you."

In the clear moonlight his face looked stern and aged, and with a sudden realisation that his dread was very great, she clung to him passionately.

But the next moment she lifted her head and smiled up at him.

"We are meeting trouble half way, dear! To-morrow, when you have seen your father, you will smile over your fears."

"To-morrow," he said, gloomily, "we shall be parted—you at Redcroft, I at Quendon."

"A distance of eighty miles—what is it! A mere trifle, and you said you would follow me soon."

"As I will! To-day is Tuesday; on Friday (at the very latest) you shall see me."

Mrs. Marriott called to Yolande that the dew was falling heavily, and it was late.

"Come in, child, you have a long journey before you. Roy, what a selfish boy you are!"

"We are coming presently," he answered, and drew Yolande into the darkest shadows.

"My darling! my darling! good-bye! Wish me god-speed! No, I shall not come in again; I am not in a fit mood for society. Let us say good-bye here, and part."

He held her close. She heard his breath come hard and fast, felt the mad beating of his heart against her side, and in a sudden burst of passion, threw her arms about his neck.

"Oh, my love, my love!" she said, tenderly.

"Whatever comes, we will never be false each to the other. Kiss me, Roy, and remember always that all my heart is yours—all my life!"

There, under the ancient elms, they parted, and when again they met the cruel blow Roy so dreaded had fallen, and all the light had gone from her eyes.

The next morning Mr. Strong and Yolande, together with Miss Rauce, went down to Redcroft, a pretty watering-place where Lord Ringrove had a bijou house.

Mr. Strong had engaged a cottage just outside the town, and Yolande was delighted with all the arrangements made for her comfort.

She could hardly understand her father's anxiety, or the tender scrutiny to which he subjected her.

"We are more prosperous now," she thought, "and in time we shall go back to the Manor. Why should he be so heavy-hearted?" and she strove by added love and care to lighten his load.

On the Thursday she received a letter from Sir John Amory, which she carried to her room. Her face was flushed, and her heart beat high with hope.

She sat down by the open window, and breaking the seal, drew out the Baronet's letter. It was written in a crabbed hand, and was very short.

"MY DEAR MISS STRONG,—

"As my son utterly refuses to acquiesce in my decision, it devolves upon me to do so. Under no circumstances can I consent to an

engagement between you, and if you have Roy's interest at heart, you will at once give him his freedom.—Yours truly,

"JOHN AMORY."

She read it through twice before she fully comprehended its meaning, and then she sat, looking with dazed eyes across the wide expanse of glittering sea, not thinking, scarcely even feeling, her heart being numbed by this great calamity.

Higher and higher the sun rose in the cloudless sky. The little yachts danced over the sunlit waves, and the fishers whistled on the beach below.

Still she sat there, silent and motionless as a statue, holding the open letter in her hand.

At last, alarmed by her long absence, Miss Rance stole upstairs, and, entering the room, cried out in terror at the girl's white stricken face, the dumb anguish in her eyes.

"Oh, my love, my love! what is it!" she whispered, clinging about Yolande, and for answer the girl put the cruel letter into her hands.

The little governess was fiercely indignant. She exhausted her whole stock of invectives (it was not large) upon Sir John, and strove by every means in her power to rouse Yolande from her stony calm.

At last the girl spoke. "Was that her voice, so burdened and hoarse with pain? Were those toneless tones hers? Where was their music and their gladness?"

The little woman at her feet shivered.

"What does he mean! Is there anything beside my poverty he can urge against me? Is there any stain upon my name? Tell me quickly and truly!"

"There is none," cried the other, weeping, and in her heart she prayed, "Heaven forgive me the lie."

Her tears stirred Yolande in a measure. She seemed to be aroused from her apathy. Turning to Miss Rance she said,—

"Must I give him up? Is there nothing else left me to do? Oh! why does he not come or write? Tell me what I am to do; you are wiser than I."

"My dear! How shall I advise you? Wait a little; Roy will certainly come."

Yolande sat clasping her hands together, like one in great bodily pain. Then she rose.

"At first," she said, in hard tones, "I did not understand my grief—it was so sudden, so unexpected. It is rushing upon me now, and, oh! how shall I bear it? I must be alone. I want to think, to see plainly what is best for me to do. I—I want to act for his good. I am going out, and if I am away for hours you must not be anxious. You know when I was a little girl I always fought out my troubles alone."

She began to dress quietly, and without any visible tremor; and only the pallor of her face, the deep shadows in her tawny eyes, gave any hint of woe.

"My dear, I am afraid Mr. Strong will not approve of your walking alone here?"

"When he knows all he will not blame me," Yolande answered, with a faint smile; "he will say this is an exceptional case."

She kissed the timid little woman, and went out, downstair and through the sweet, old-fashioned garden, and towards the beach. The fishermen watched the little, swift figure with admiring eyes, and wondered that the "lovely lady at the cottage" had no greeting for them. She walked like one in a sleep, her grand eyes looking steadily before her, her face white and sad, her lips compressed. Hour after hour she spent roaming along the rocky coast, fighting bravely with her pain, praying earnestly that she might see how best to serve her lover. She was conscious neither of hunger nor fatigue; she had no thought that was not wholly Roy's, no prayer that did not breathe his name.

It was almost seven o'clock when she reached home, and suddenly grown faint with fasting and long walking she tottered wearily up the garden path. Her father met her in the porch, and one glance at his face told her he knew all. He drew her gently in.

"Yolande, what will you do?" he asked.

"I shall do what is best for Roy, father. If he wishes for his freedom I will give it him."

"But if not? and I fancy he will not lightly let you go."

"If he holds me to my word I shall remain faithful to him," she said, in the same quiet way. "I will cling to him through all, but I will not marry him without Sir John's consent, for that would be to ruin him."

"And you do not love him well enough to share poverty with him?"

"Oh, yes, yes! I am not afraid of hardship for myself, but he has never known what it is to lack any good thing. Father," breaking into a little sob, despite all her bravery, "father, if I do not marry Roy I shall be Yolande Strong all my life."

Looking into her beautiful eyes, he could not doubt her truth or her powers of endurance. Scooping and kissing her tenderly, he said,—

"Hush on, my darling. Even Sir John may not prove so harsh as he appears, and Roy is sure to write."

She was very quiet all that evening, but gave no sign of the pain and fear tearing at her heart, and Mr. Strong wondered at her self-control and courage. He was beginning to understand her nature better now, more truly to gauge its depths, but he had expected many tears and laments, not yet knowing how brave and unselfish the girl was.

She spent the next day in watching for a letter from Roy, but none came, and towards evening even her courage began to fail her, and afraid of breaking down she went into the garden, where at least she would be unmolested and unnoticed.

It was growing dusk now. Overhead the stars were shining, and the waves crept up gently to the overhanging cliffs. She looked down on the silver track made by the moonlight, and saw the tossing skiffs as one who gazes with unseeing eyes. She was conscious of nothing but her pain, and the dread that Roy had failed her. Ah! how she loved him! This fear of parting had shown her all he was to her, had revealed the deepest depths of her heart, and she shrank back afraid of the revelation.

There was a step outside the garden boundaries. What of that? Why should she care to look at any passer by? It was not Roy, he trod so lightly, always "as though his heart were a feather." Nearer and nearer; now the steps halted at the gate, and a voice said,—

"Yolande!"

With a cry she rushed to him, and threw her arms about his neck,—

"Oh, my love! my love! you have come at last."

He sank upon a seat, drawing her down beside him, and looking into his face she forgot her own woe. All the brightness and colouring, delicate as a woman's, had gone from it. It was white and drawn with repressed pain; there were hollows under the bonny blue eyes, and the lips were set in a straight, hard line.

"My dear boy, how you have suffered!" Yolande said in an uncertain voice, "and for my sake! Oh! my dear, although it breaks my heart to say it, let me tell you now that if you wish your freedom is yours now and unreservedly!"

He broke out fiercely,—

"That is what I do not wish! What I will not take! Is Yolande, are you afraid of poverty with me? Oh! my darling! my beautiful darling! If you consent to share my lot I have nothing to offer you but love. But I will work day and night for you. I will esteem no labour too great for you. I can bear any and everything save estrangement from you."

How handsome and loyal he looked! How all her soul was moved by the passion in his voice. She clung to him, not weeping, nor moaning, knowing well how her tears would distress him.

"Roy! you have not made the parting final with your father! The breach is not yet beyond healing!"

"We cannot meet as friends unless I promise to behave like a brute to you. I am still his heir

until I crown my iniquities by marrying you," he answered moodily.

"My darling! I am of age; I can please myself. Let us ask Mr. Strong's permission to an early wedding. Let us begin life together now."

"Father would not consent to such an arrangement; nor will I, for to do that would ruin you. Oh, Roy! do not think I am afraid of poverty. Have I not always been poor? I am afraid to hurt you. We are so young we can wait, and perhaps when Sir John sees how loyal we are—how nothing can change our mutual love—he will relent."

"He will never do that," savagely; "he is as obstinate as a mule."

"Why should he be so angry with us?" wistfully. "Is it only because we are poor?"

"He dared not look into his dear eyes as he answered."

"He had other views for me."

Please Heaven, she should never learn the secret her father so jealously guarded from her, and he began to urge her passionately to consent to a hasty marriage.

"No, no," she said tenderly, "for my sake you shall not lose your heritage, your father's love. Let us be patient, dear! A little while."

"Patient!" he cried; "who would be patient under such injustice! What man would consent to have his life mapped out for him, his bride chosen for him? I can't, and won't! I mean to be true to myself and to you, my girl, come what may!" His strong, young voice shook with emotion. "Somewhere I'll find work, somehow I will get you a home! Only be true; it is all I ask, sweetheart wife."

She laid her hands upon his shoulders, and looked fully into his eyes.

"As I love you now I will love you always. I will wait years, if need be, for you, heartening myself with the thought that one day we shall meet never to part again! Now try and tell me, Roy, what you purpose doing!"

"Well, having failed to win you to my wish, there is only one thing left me to do. I shall emigrate. In this underpeopled old country I should be a complete failure. I don't know enough to earn fifteen shillings a week as clerk. No; I will go where muscle is more than brain, and courage and determination meet their reward."

She hid her face upon his breast; her courage suddenly failing her.

"Roy! Roy!" she cried, "how shall I bear it? So far away—so cut off from all who love you! Oh, Heaven! I wish we had never met, for I am making you an exile, an outcast; and how shall my love atone to you for all you lose!"

She was sobbing wildly, and he was too miserable to offer any comfort. He could only kiss her passionately and call her by endearing names, and at last he touched the right chord.

"For my sake, darling, be brave!"

She fought with and conquered her passion, and, rising, they stood face to face, looking miserably into each other's eyes; the parting was so near, and it would be long before they met again. What wonder their hearts failed them! What wonder that the young man was shaken to the soul! A week hence, home, friends, sweetheart, would be left behind, and he would go alone to seek his fortune.

"You will see my father!" Yolande whispered, but he shook his head.

"Tell him all; but I am unfit for any company to-night. Oh, Heaven! how can I leave you! Sweetheart, be true; if you were false I would go headlong to ruin. I would choose the quickest way to the devil!"

"I shall be true," she said, scarcely above a whisper. "Kiss me, dear heart, and go!"

He caught her close; he kissed her madly again and again; then, with a groan, tore himself away, and she sank upon the grass, sobbing.

"Come back, come back! Oh! my darling! oh! my darling! my heart is broken!"

CHAPTER V.

THREE years have passed since that agonised parting between the lovers, and many changes have taken place since then.

Mr. Strong has obtained a lucrative appointment under Government, and Yolande is known as an heiress.

Just six months after Roy sailed for Australia a letter of entreaty for forgiveness reached her father. It was written by his false friend, Ludwig Hargrave, who lay at the point of death in a little Indian village. It said, too, that the writer had amassed a fortune, and as he had no living relations he prayed Strong to accept it in trust for his daughter, as a peace offering.

So she was rich beyond her desire; the mortgage on the Manor was paid to the full, the old place had undergone innumerable repairs, and was once more in the possession of her father.

She had been glad at heart when this fortune came so mysteriously to her, for she thought, "Now Sir John will consent to our marriage," but she was bitterly mistaken. Her wealth seemed rather to rouse the old man to greater opposition, and she wondered miserably why this should be. She heard often from Roy, who spoke hopefully of the future, and promised soon to return. "And then," he wrote, "if the governor is still obstinate we must please ourselves. Surely you will not spoil my life! I am getting on famously, am developing quite a genius for farming, and like roughing it a bit. My darling! how will you bear transplanting to such scenes as these! And you an heiress! Oh, yes, and it is all very well to say, 'all I have is yours.' Until I can give you at least a comfortable house I shall not press for marriage. The man who can contentedly live upon his wife is a cur!"

So Yolande had had three seasons in town, and, despite her mother's history, had been courted and flattered, had won men's hearts unwittingly to herself. But she was true to the gallant lover so far away. She never gave a word or a smile to any man that the vainest could misconstrue; she was courteous and kindly—no more. Her beauty had a shadow upon it, a shadow of sorrow and patience, but it served only to draw men more fondly towards her.

It was a glorious July day, and she sat alone in the study, her favourite room. She had just been reading Roy's last letter, and it lay open upon her lap.

"Oh, love; my love! come to me," was her heart's prayer. "I am weary of watching and waiting, of wearing out my days alone!"

"Sir John Amory," announced a servant, and, hastily hiding the letter, she rose to meet Roy's father, a bright flush on her lovely face, a great hope in her heart.

She saw a man of some sixty years, erect, tall, still handsome, but very haggard; he looked critically at her a moment with his stern, black eyes, then said,—

"I have the honour to address Miss Strong!"

She bowed, and began to tremble, his tone being anything but reassuring.

"Pray be seated, as I fear I must ask your attention for some length of time."

She obeyed, and sat opposite to him, in the full light of the July morning; so lovely, so young, surely he would not have the conscience wantonly to wound her.

"I believe," he said, after a slight pause, "you are still in correspondence with my son!"

"Mr. Amory and I are still engaged," with a quiet dignity worthy a queen.

"A long engagement usually ends in nothing. Don't you think it would be wiser to give him his freedom, and transfer your affection to some other admirer?"

The grand eyes flashed with a look of superb scorn at him, but she still maintained her quiet manner.

"Mr. Amory neither asks nor desires his freedom, and I shall marry him as soon as he has prepared a home for me!"

"Despite my opposition? You do well to condemn him to poverty and exile."

"He need endure neither," coldly. "I am not the penniless girl I was when we first met, and all that I have is his. I owe him all that I have for his love and fidelity."

Sir John listened with flushed, angry face and stormy eyes.

"Is it nothing to you, that for your sake he will lose the old home, where the Amorys have lived for generations?"

"Indeed it is, Sir John. It is bitter pain and grief to me to reflect on his father's harshness and injustice. He was and is a loving son; he would have pleased you in everything but this one thing. You have no right to seek to control his choice of a wife. What do you urge against me? Am I not well born? Am I not wealthy and fitted by education to share his honours, Sir John?" And now her voice grew wistful. "Why do you hate me?"

She had risen and stood tall and fair, before him, with such pain and currency in her eyes that one would have thought he could not strike the blow he meditated.

"Why do I hate you?" contemptuously. "I neither hate nor love you; but my son ceases to be my son on the day he weds himself to shame. I am an old man; I may not have long to live. Set him free that I may see him home again. Other men will love you, for you are fair; other men will be willing to forget your name is stained."

"My name stained!" she said in low, incredulous tones. "My name! Sir John, you must prove your rash assertion. If it is so your son is free."

"Is it possible you do not know?" uncomfortably. "Has no one told you?"

"Speak plainly. I do not like riddles, and I am utterly ignorant of your meaning. But be careful what you say. My father is an honourable man."

"It is not of your father I speak, but your mother."

The hot blood flamed to her face.

"She is dead, and should be beyond calumny. Oh! how dare you come here with stories you cannot prove! She died young, and away from home; her loss well nigh broke my father's heart."

"And crushed his pride," supplemented Sir John. "She betrayed him, and eloped with his friend, Ludwig Hargrave."

Yolande was white to the lips now with passion.

"It's a lie!" she cried; "if for one moment I were a man you should repent your words. Go!"

"Not yet, Miss Strong! It appears it is my painful duty to tell you a shameful story. I can pity you now, knowing your ignorance. You were two years old when your mother left house and husband for dishonour and exile. Your father pursued the guilty lovers, but never overtook them. Allyn Strong was killed by a fall on the Alps; her paramour escaped. Go to your father and ask him if every word I say is not true!"

She listened with dilated eyes, her slender hands were pressed to her white throat, and she shivered as if with cold, then suddenly she awayed and fell against the wall, looking like one dead.

Sir John sprang to her side.

"Don't take it so terribly hard," and he would have supported her, but she flung upon him fiercely.

"Keep off! Do not touch me!" she said, in an awful voice. "Given me time—time to realise this awful thing!"

A heavy silence fell upon them, and Sir John thought of ringing for assistance, seeing that Yolande still remained leaning there with that terrible look of agony frozen on her lovely face, but at last she spoke.

"Your son is free. Oh! yes! You may tell him he is free! Now you have conquered, be content and leave me alone with my misery. You should be a happy man, Sir John, seeing you have blighted a young girl's life, destroyed all her faith in, and reverence for, the mother who has always been as an angel to her. Mr. Amory will thank you for your zeal—as I cannot."

He tried to speak, but by a gesture Yolande forbade him, and feeling hardly so easy in his mind as he could wish, he went out.

Then the unhappy girl crept to the study, hardly knowing how she went. A great horror fitted her heart; instinctively she felt Sir John's story was true, and now read aright her father's long absence, and strange reluctance to speak of his wife. She dragged herself across the room—how weary her limbs had suddenly grown!—and stood with lifted eyes and locked hands, gazing into the fair, false face which had wrought such ruin.

"Mother!" she wailed. "Oh! my mother! How could you do this great evil! How could you break his heart, and dower me with shame! Your child! Oh! Heaven! Your child! I have scorned women such as you; but how shall I scorn you who gave me life! Oh! mother! mother! mother! You should have killed me before you fled!" and with a cry of exceeding anguish she sank prone upon the floor, hiding her stricken face upon her arms.

"I shall never be glad again! Never hold up my head any more! And I have been so proud of my name. Mother, I so loved you! Oh! Roy! Roy! What will you say when you know all the shameful truth!"

Her tears fell fast now, blinding her with their bitter flow. She had no longer any care or wish to live; she only longed to be hidden "out of the world's way, out of the light!"

Lying there, she wondered, dully, if Roy would ever seek her, or if he, too, would drift away from her as all good things seemed drifting, and thought unconsciously, in the words of a great poet,—

Never any more while I live,
Need I hope to see his face, as before.

Ah! How could she live under the knowledge that he was changed; the bonny boyish lover who had been so ready to sacrifice all for her sake! And what is life without love?

I know not how it is with men,
For women there is no good of life but love—but love.

The golden morning wore slowly on, and still the girl lay there, her proud head brought low, and still the pitiless, fair face smiled down upon her.

Mr. Strong came in to luncheon, wondering that Yolande did not meet him in the porch.

"Where is the child?" he asked Miss Rance.

"In the study. She has been alone ever since Sir John Amory left. I knocked, but she would not give me permission to enter. I am afraid —" and there she paused, looking wistfully into the man's dark face.

"You are afraid he has told her the truth?" he said, through his clenched teeth. "Ah! the poor child! He might have shown her mercy."

He hastened to the study, and gently opening the door looked in.

In a moment he was kneeling beside the beautiful, prostrate figure.

With infinite tenderness he lifted her in his strong arms, and drew her tear-disfigured face upon his breast.

Ah! the shame and anguish in her lovely eyes. The man's heart ached bitterly for her as he stooped and kissed the tremulous mouth.

"Father! father!" she cried, clinging to him wildly. "Say it is not true! Oh! take this dreadful fear from me! Oh! Heaven! You do not answer!" And with a pathetic gesture of despair she covered her face.

"My darling, listen! It has been the endeavour of my life to keep this thing from you. Perhaps I was wrong; but I wanted you to have some goodness, some pleasure, whilst it was in my power to give it. And Yolande, could I say to you of the woman I loved: 'She was false to the core! She was more guilty than the poor wretches one meets upon the streets! She was my wife! Your mother! Oh! beautiful Heaven! I wonder now that her flight did not rob me of my reason.'"

Yolande listened in utter silence, and he felt her quiver in his embrace.

"Daughter, was not my grief harder to bear

than yours! Think how many years I have suffered alone, making no moan, no outcry! Cannot you be brave now, for my sake!"

A faint flush stole over her face and throat. She dashed aside her tears.

"My darling! my darling! I will try!" she said, in a low, unsteady voice. "Let me begin at once. And now that I know how sorely you have suffered—how terribly you need consolation—it may be—it may be, I shall not find it hard to bear my own burden."

She rose as she spoke; smoothed down the folds of her dress, and turned as if to go, but paused on the threshold. "Dear, does Roy know?"

"Yes. I told him all the night he asked for you."

Her beautiful face was suddenly transfigured by joy.

"And he loved me still! He gave up all for me! Oh, father! father! I can bear anything now."

He drew her hand in his arm, and led her out, glancing back once at his wife's portrait, and in his heart he almost cursed her for the woe she had brought their child.

Beyond being very subdued in her manner, there was no very visible change in Yolande that day, and only Rolf Strong guessed how deep the wound was.

In the evening he walked down to the village, where he found a most unusual stir, and on inquiring the cause he learned the six o'clock passenger and a goods train had collided about a mile up the line, and it was feared many were mortally injured.

"They're bringin' the poor critters up as fast as they can. And the inn's about full, sir. One or two o' us can accommodate some o' them. But there's Sir John Amory, the gent what came down this mornin', and they don't know where to put him. His servant was stone dead when they took him up; and Sir John have got a broken leg."

Rolf Strong stood silent a moment, fighting with himself.

This man had wrecked Yolande's happiness. Could he offer him any kindness—any hospitality?

Let him lie in misery. What was his pain compared with that young girl's?

But under all his harshness he had a good heart, and after a while he said,—

"Let Sir John be brought up to the Manor. I know him; and any others for whom accommodation cannot be found in the village. I will prepare the ladies for their arrival."

There was a great bustle amongst the servants when they heard the news, and soon all were actively engaged (under the superintendence of Miss Rance and Yolande) preparing beds for the sufferers.

There were only two, however—Sir John, and a poor little maid on her way to her "first place." And when she was comfortably installed in her room, Yolande stole in to see her enemy.

His leg had been set, but the pain made him wakeful, and as she entered he turned his head restlessly upon his pillows.

"You! I suppose you think this is punishment for my conduct to you?"

"I think nothing but that you are an invalid, and I your nurse," coldly.

CHAPTER VI.

FOR many days Sir John was delirious; the little maid, Ann Judd, was able to sit up before consciousness returned to him.

Yolande and Miss Rance were unremitting in their attentions to the invalids, and Mr. Strong placed no restriction upon his daughter, feeling it was best that every hour of her day should be filled.

He wrote to Roy, telling him of his father's visit and accident, and giving him his freedom.

"Yolande will write you good-bye when she has learned to think more calmly of her changed prospects."

It was now the end of July, and Sir John, weak as a child, and very querulous, lay on his bed,

listening to the sighing of the trees as they swayed to and fro before his window.

Suddenly Yolande's voice sounded in the adjoining room. She was reading to Ann Judd, and he strained his ears to catch her words.

What a mellow voice she had. How musical its cadences were! Why did she not amuse him thus! If she read to him at all she chose such articles from newspapers as she thought would interest him. But for her other patient's edification she read "Idylls of the King," and such books as "David Copperfield," or "Jane Eyre."

He stirred impatiently, and rang the bell beside him. Yolande answered his summons quickly and quietly.

"I want my pillows rearranged," he said, ungraciously; and, although she flushed under his tone, she lifted him gently and smoothed out his pillow with deft hands.

"What is the matter with you? You are whiter and thinner than when I saw you first."

"I have had a great deal to do, Sir John, and very little exercise since then."

"Ugh! You're not a very cheerful companion for a sick room!"

Just for a moment he thought she would flash into anger, but she controlled herself admirably.

"I am sorry, and will endeavour to be more amusing in future."

"If you mean that, bring your book here and read to me."

"I beg your pardon; I cannot devote myself exclusively to you. It is Ann's turn now; but if you care to listen I will leave her door open."

"Thank you, no!" sharply. "I hate a woman to speak loudly. Come back; I've something to say to you. If you were wise you would affect great consideration for me, as it might soften me towards you."

The flash on her lovely face was deeper now.

"I might be tempted to do so if I had any hope of winning your favour, but I have not. Pray forget we ever met in any other characters than those of nurse and invalid."

After she was gone he lay thinking of her words and ways, and doing his best to steel his heart against her. But the next day he said, curtly,—

"You are going to the girl in there!"

"Yes."

"You can leave the door open. My eyes ache too badly to allow me to read."

She smiled slightly as she obeyed, and after this it became the custom for her to seat herself midway between the invalids, and read or sing as they wished. One morning Sir John turned abruptly towards her.

"Why does not your father visit me?"

She blushed deeply.

"He accords me his hospitality grudgingly and of necessity, but I will relieve him of my presence as soon as that imbecile doctor will allow me to move. I suppose he resents my conduct to you?"

"I am afraid so. You see, he wished me always to remain in ignorance of the past, and the blow you dealt me was as sudden as it was cruel."

"And you are not inclined to forgive or forget?"

"I will try to forgive, but it is impossible to forget," she answered, sadly.

"And if you have not forgiven me why are you so careful for my comfort?"

"I would do as much for any other creature who was thrown upon me for assistance."

"That isn't very flattering to my vanity," Sir John said, with a short, hard laugh. "but it is at least truthful. Come nearer, Miss Strong. I am going to make an admission which has cost me a struggle with my pride. But for that unfortunate stain upon your name there is no girl I would so much wish to call daughter as yourself."

"As it is, Sir John," wearily, "you regard me as a dangerous person?"

"To a man's peace of mind, yes. I have tried to hate you, and failed. It isn't your beauty that has won my regard, for I have met many lovely women in my life, and I am quite sure it

is not your affection or esteem for me," with a wry grimace. "What witchery have you used to bring about such a result? You don't know. Ah, well! Tell your father John Amory wishes to see and thank him for his hospitality."

"You forget, sir, it is given grudgingly and of necessity," with a demure look.

He smiled slightly, and regarded her more kindly than he had hitherto done.

"You are a good girl," he said, almost gently. "Your father should be proud of his treasure. I hope you will be happy some day in a good man's love."

A little bitter smile curved her beautiful mouth.

"You are generous, Sir John. I am unfit to enter your family, but you are willing that I should carry my shame into some other house."

"Just so; it is the way of the world. And, after all, Yolande, you and Roy were more obdurate at the time of your engagement. If ever you met again you would probably find yourselves disenchanted."

"I think not," with quiet confidence. "We both believe the poet's words, that, as each man has but one soul, so each has but one love."

"And for Roy's sake you will live out your life alone?"

She bowed, and moved to a distance that he might not see the distress on her face, the anguish in her eyes; but he was keener sighted than she believed.

(Continued on page 400.)

REMEMBER MAJUBA!

THE JANUARY number of the *Windsor Magazine* publishes a particularly topical interview with the only man who won a V.C. at Majuba Hill in the former Boer War of 1881. Corporal Farmer, in describing the incident that led to his proud distinction, said: "It was when I saw that all was over, and that Colley was finished, that my little affair happened. The ammunition had been spent, the 58th, the 60th, and the 92nd Highlanders, and the Naval Brigade were completely at the mercy of the Boers, and some of the last group standing up to the foe I saw shot down in front of me. The officers were practically all dead or severely wounded, and, in fact, all was 'up.' I belonged to the Army Hospital Corps, which you know to-day better as the 'Army Medical Corps,' and I was busy helping Sir Arthur Landon to dress the wounds of a fallen soldier, when the Boers shot at us as we were in the very act of bandaging the wound. We were all three hit, and I sprang up and waved vigorously the white bandage above my head as a 'flag of truce,' never dreaming but that even a 'savage' foe would have respected such a signal. But a bullet came flying and struck me in the right arm holding up the flag of truce, and that hand fell powerless by my side."

"But I've got another arm," I said gaily to the surgeon, and I picked up the white bandage with my left hand and raised it aloft again, waving it. In almost as little time as it takes me to tell you another bullet came along and passed clean through my arm, here at the elbow. Then that fell also, and I rolled over in great agony. The surgeon, who was himself mortally wounded, injected morphia, so great was my pain, and I knew little more till I was rescued. You will not wonder that I have little respect for the Boers' gentleness, innocence, and natural simplicity that one hears so much about! It is all bunkum. But I have, as is also natural, great respect for their accuracy as marksmen, and I expect it will be a more tedious job than many people think before the Transvaal is thoroughly subdued. I know it all, that region round Majuba—Lady-smith, Dundee, Gienoe; those names are not new to me, as you will guess. I saw too much of them nearly twenty years ago. What a difference there was then in those parts! Lady-smith was, when I went there under Colley, just a big village, with one main street and a prison; Majuba Hill was a place scarcely one South African out of a dozen had ever heard of, let alone folks in England."

CLIFFE COURT.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE contents of the sealed packet put into Arline's hand by Mrs. Carroll ran as follows:—

MY DEAR AUNT,—It is the eve of my departure for Australia, and I am sitting in my bed-room alone. You left me half-an-hour ago under the impression that I was tired, and might get some sleep, but I am too much excited to think of slumber, and therefore I am writing to you. Perhaps, when I have finished this letter, I shall tear it up; at any rate, I shall certainly not give it to you to-morrow, for the only circumstances under which I should feel justified in letting it fall into your hands would be in case of my death, and that, I have a presentiment, will take place before very long. That I am very ill I know quite well, and I have little hope that the voyage to Australia will do me good; but for all that I shall try it, because it is simply an impossibility for me to remain quietly with you any longer. I am possessed by a sort of restless fever, that makes me long to get away from here—from England, in fact. I think my feelings are embodied by that line of Hood's—'Anywhere, anywhere, out of the world!'

"You asked me to-day if I had had a lover, and I told you 'yes'—the truest, brightest, bravest lover woman ever had!

"He was a gentleman, the son of a nobleman, and he came to W—for the races. I suppose he saw me through the windows of the music shop where I was serving; at any rate, he came in, and contrived to keep me talking for some time. The next day he came again and the next, and the next. I daresay it was wrong of me to let him talk, but, aunt, I could not help it. I believe I must have loved him from the very first moment my eyes fell on his bright face.

"Very soon he asked me to be his wife, and when I inquired what his father would say at the idea of such a *misalliance*, he answered in his impetuous way that it did not matter, that he had himself to please, and he was resolved to marry me; so we became engaged, and he left W—with the understanding that I was to keep the engagement secret, at least for a time.

"He wrote to me often, and I was very happy indeed at first, until one day, when a middle-aged, haughty-looking gentleman entered the shop, and said he wanted a private interview with me. I guessed at once who he was, and I also guessed his errand; however, I took him into a sitting-room, and he then told me he was Lord Cliffe, and had come on behalf of his son, who had informed him he was engaged to me. I remember the very words he uttered—'If I live to be a hundred years old I don't think I shall forget them.

"I don't wish to wound your feelings,' he said, in his cold, cutting voice, 'but you will readily understand that it would be an utter impossibility for me to consent to an alliance between you and my son. Of course, he is over age, and is therefore legally free to do what he likes; but if he defies my authority in this matter I shall virtually disown him, and most assuredly he will never inherit a farthing of my money.'

"That would make no difference to my affection, my lord,' I said.

"Perhaps not,' he returned, 'for I do not wish to insinuate that your affection is not entirely disinterested. An opportunity occurs for your proving it. Alec is deeply in debt, and unless I advance him the money to satisfy his creditors he will be arrested, and, not only that, will lose caste in society, for his liabilities are of that description called debts of honour, and unless they are met he will be a social pariah. It is for you to say whether this shall be. He acknowledges he has given his word that he will marry you, and he will keep it, although he now sees the madness of it, and bitterly regrets ever having met you. I leave the matter in your hands; marry him, and ruin him for life; or

by giving him up, prove that you really love him.'

"He continued arguing in this way, and my heart was torn in two with the struggle of not knowing how to decide. The idea that Alec had so far ceased to care for me as to regret our meeting was dreadful, and this Lord Cliffe assured me was the case. My pride—and you know I am not destitute of that quality—was on fire, and finally I said I would agree to Lord Cliffe's proposal; so then and there I sat down and wrote a letter to Alec, which he promised to deliver. In it I told him that, for his own sake, I gave him back his liberty, and I took off my ring and enclosed it in the envelope. I begged him not to attempt to see me again, for that it would only be a source of useless pain to each, and then I told Lord Cliffe that I should leave my situation and return to my relatives, for I could not bear the idea of remaining where I was, and his lordship seemed rather anxious on the point too.

"Well, I came to you a few days later, and since then I have been hoping against hope that something might happen to bring my lover back to me; but a little while ago I saw in a paper that it was probable he was going to marry a Miss Stone—whom I had heard him speak of as a great heiress—and then I knew the futility of my wishes.

"I have kept silence towards you because Lord Cliffe made me give my word of honour that I would do so, but it has been very hard work; for many, many times I have longed to take you into my confidence; and now that I am on the point of leaving you I cannot rest, for the thought of your always remaining in ignorance. It is better for me to go away, dear aunt. Here I am a burden to you, and although you will not let me feel it, I know quite well that it is so; and if I settle down into a chronic invalid, I must remain a burden for the rest of my life. If this voyage restores my health so much the better. I shall be able to work, and get my own living, and if I die—why, that will be better still, for I shall be at rest! Good-bye,—Your loving

"DAISY."

Arline, although she had started violently on seeing the name that was so familiar to her, had gone on reading to the end without remark, and as she finished, and laid down the letter, Mrs. Carroll, who had been silently wiping her eyes, said,—

"I am not surprised, I fancied it was something of the sort; but it was a strange coincidence that her lover should be the father of yours."

Strange indeed! To Arline it seemed something more than a coincidence. She did not speak for some minutes; but sat quietly musing. Suddenly she asked,—

"What was the name of your niece? You call her 'Daisy,' but I suppose she was not christened so."

"No; her proper name was Margaret Sumner."

Margaret Sumner! The name Esther Grant had repeated so persistently, and coupled with Alec Cliffe's. Surely here was a clue at last.

Very eagerly the young girl told Mrs. Carroll of her meeting with Esther Grant—a subject that had never before been mentioned between them—and, as may be imagined, the elder woman was very much surprised at the recital.

"Esther Grant was the name of one of the women with whom Daisy went to Melbourne," she exclaimed; "there can be no doubt of its being the name. Is it possible my niece can have met Alec Cliffe out there and married him?"

"Not only possible, but most probable, I should say."

"But how is it she did not let me know if that were the case?"

"Most likely her husband would desire to keep the marriage secret from his father, who, I know, died in the belief that Alec was unmarried."

This seemed feasible enough, and for some time the two women sat discussing the various incidents, and wondering what steps they had better take with regard to the information so lately acquired.

"If I only knew where to write to Hubert!"

Arline exclaimed, getting up and beginning to pace the room. "Each day that passes fills me with deeper anxiety concerning him. I am so afraid some accident has happened to him."

"If that were so you would have heard," remarked Mrs. Carroll. "No news is good news."

"I wish I could look at it in that light, but I can't. He promised to write directly he reached London, and I have never once heard from him."

A horrible fear was beginning to fasten upon her. Suppose Hubert, thrown into the society of Lady De Roubais, had yielded to her fascinations, and was regretting his betrothal! The thought was an unworthy one, and she tried her hardest to dismiss it from her mind; but in spite of all her efforts it at times made itself felt, and her heart sank with a sense of deadly foreboding.

The comfort of being able to talk openly and unreservedly to Mrs. Carroll can hardly be described, and can only be appreciated by those who have been similarly situated, with no one to share their troubles. Even if poor Daisy's letter had never come to light Mrs. Carroll would have been deeply interested in Arline's love-story; but now that they were both connected in so curious a way with the Cliffes, her interest was well nigh as keen as that of the girl herself.

"It is quite clear that this Esther Grant knows something about the relations existing between Alec Cliffe and my niece," she said; "the question is, will she ever be in a fit mental condition to reveal it."

"I think and hope so. Mrs. Belton says in her letter that she shows signs of improvement, and Dr. Fletcher always held out hopes that her memory would return in time."

"It would be best that we should see her and question her before Lady De Roubais has the opportunity of finding anything out; for from what you say of her I fancy the Countess would not be over-scrupulous in making use of any information she might acquire."

Arline shook her head, but did not reply, and a pause ensued, which was broken by a servant opening the door and announcing,—

"Dr. Fletcher!"

Mrs. Carroll, very much surprised at the apparition, got up and held out both hands in greeting.

"I am truly glad to see you, doctor," she exclaimed. "You have arrived at a most opportune moment."

"Have I? Glad to hear it. Well, and how are you?" shaking hands with Arline. "You are not killed yet by the quietude of the place, I see, although you don't look so well as when I saw you last. Fretting, I suppose?"

Arline did not deny the imputation, and the doctor seated himself in front of the fire and put his feet on the fender.

"Tell you what, it's precious cold to-day," he remarked, sipping the wine Mrs. Carroll hospitably pressed upon him. "I only came from the Continent yesterday," he added; "was called home by a patient who took it into his head that he should die unless he saw me. He is staying at Leamington, and I had to remain the night with him; and as I was so near, and had nothing to do to-day, I thought I'd pop over to see you. I wanted to know how you liked the companion I sent you."

"Very much indeed; I can't be grateful enough to you," returned Mrs. Carroll, with an affectionate glance in Arline's direction.

"Hum! That's satisfactory as far as it goes; but a new broom generally sweeps clean, I believe, and the only way to prove a pudding is to eat it. Still, it's something to find Miss Lester doesn't go gadding about, looking after sweethearts, like nine-tenths of the girls one meets nowadays. Girls haven't improved since we were young, Mrs. Carroll."

"Haven't they? I think they are about the same now as they were then."

"Then we'll agree to differ on that point—not that I see much of them, for I've no time to waste in frivolous pursuits. By-the-by," he turned to Arline, "how's your lover, Hubert Cliffe?"

"I don't know."

"Don't know! How's that; doesn't he write to you?"

"He has not done so since he left Cliffe."

Dr. Fletcher was surprised, and wanted to hear full particulars, which Arline gave him; and when she had finished her story Mrs. Carroll went on telling of the discovery of her niece's letter and its contents—a recital which greatly interested him.

"I believe as firmly that Alec Cliffe was married to Hubert's mother—whether she turned out to be Daisy Sumner or not—as that my name's Samuel Fletcher!" he exclaimed, energetically. "I would give a good deal to prove it, partly for the sake of Hubert, who is a thoroughly good fellow, and partly because I should like to see that French countess, with her grand ways and holy-toity airs, turned out of the Court where she queens it over everybody. The great point now is to get Esther Grant away from there, and that I fancy I can do with Mrs. Belton's aid."

"You may count on Mrs. Belton," interpolated Arline. "She is most anxious to see Hubert back again, and will be sure to do anything she can."

"Except hold her tongue! I know just how far I can trust Mrs. Belton. I haven't been acquainted with her all these years for nothing. However, she won't talk of what she doesn't know, so I think in this case she is to be depended on. I shall go and see Mrs. Grant tomorrow, and peremptorily order change of air, and then—"

"Send her here!" put in Mrs. Carroll, impulsively, and the physician nodded his head, as if pleased with the notion.

"I don't think I could do better, for she will be under your own eyes then. I fancy," he added, thoughtfully, "Lord Cliffe suspected she held in her possession some secret relating to his brother, for he was so anxious to see and question her. Anyway, if there is a chance of her recovering her intellect sufficiently to remember, Hubert had better not go to Australia until he hears what she has to tell. What on earth can have become of the boy! It is most extraordinary that he has not written; he can't have started for Melbourne already, surely!"

"Oh! no," exclaimed Arline, "he would certainly not go without letting me know. If I do not hear something this week I shall send to a private inquiry office, and have a search instituted."

"I would have called at one on my way through London if I had known. By-the-by, I saw Colonel Stuart as I passed through, and he stopped me to ask if I could give him any information regarding Lady Carlyon."

"And could you?" inquired the young girl eagerly. "I too, am most anxious about her. I have written to Sir Ascot, but he has not condescended to reply."

"He's a thorough-paced scoundrel, that's my opinion of Sir Ascot Carlyon! No, I could tell Stuart little more than he already knew, which was that the poor woman had been removed to a private lunatic asylum, where I cannot say. I used to be her medical attendant till that quack West came to the place, and then it pleased Sir Ascot to make a change. I think I was rather too plain spoken for him. Stuart declared that he did not believe she was mad at all, and it seems he went to Sir Ascot and told him so, but Sir Ascot showed him the certificate signed by two doctors, so he could say no more, and since then he has directed his efforts to finding out where she is, but so far without success. He looked quite worn and haggard yesterday, so much so, that I asked him if he had been ill, and when he said 'no,' I told him his appearance belied him. We were talking some little time, for I was waiting for the train, and had nothing else to do, and he did not seem to have much to occupy his time either. He told me he knew this part of the world very well indeed, having been in the habit of visiting a friend every autumn for the shooting, when he was in England, and, strange to say, he mentioned this very house, the site of which he remembered perfectly. We spoke of you, Miss Lester; and he informed me that you and Lady Carlyon have been to

school together, which was perhaps the reason he takes an interest in you, for it's as plain as a pikestaff that he is still in love with her."

Dr. Fletcher's bluntness amounted almost to a fault, and had long ago passed into a proverb in his own neighbourhood; it was only excused by his extreme kind-heartedness, which, with people who knew him well, amply compensated for the straightforward way in which he advanced his opinions, perfectly reckless whether those of his hearer coincided, or were diametrically opposed to his own.

"It seems to me the world is all at cross-purposes," sighed Arline, involuntarily, as Mrs. Carroll left the room. She was thinking of Alicia, and the story she had told her the night of her arrival at the Chase, thinking how different her friend's fate might have been if only she had married the man of her choice.

"You are right, my dear, the world is full of contradictions," acquiesced the doctor. "Still, you'll find that, if you'll only wait patiently, things right themselves in the end. I'm an old man, and so I speak with the wisdom of experience; believe me, clouds are darkest just before the dawn breaks."

He patted her kindly on the shoulder, and at that minute Mrs. Carroll came in again.

"I've been ordering a bed to be aired for you," she observed. "Of course you will stay the night!"

"Well, I didn't intend to, for I purposed returning to Leamington this evening, but I shan't have to see my patient till to-morrow, so there's no particular reason why I should not remain till the morning if you'll be good enough to put me up. I shall probably get back to Cliffe to-morrow night. I hear that my *locum tenens* is not getting on quite so well as he might be—doesn't understand the people like I do. He's a clever fellow, though, especially in mental and nervous disorders; and I told him to visit Mrs. Grant in my absence, so perhaps he may have made some progress with her—I hope to goodness he has. Anyway, I shall send her here for you and Miss Lester to complete the cure, and in return for the kindness shown her I trust she'll be able to give us valuable information which will repay it."

CHAPTER XXX.

SIR ASCOT CARLYON'S habits were somewhat irregular, and his valet had acquired the faculty of never being surprised at his erratic movements; nevertheless, and in spite of this, he was betrayed into an expression of astonishment when, the morning after the Baronet's journey to W—shire, he heard the bell ring, and on going to Sir Ascot's room found him in bed.

"What the deuce are you staring at!" irritably demanded the Baronet, who looked rather whiter and more haggard than usual. "Is there anything so very peculiar about me that attracts your attention?"

"I beg pardon, sir," stammered the valet. "I thought you intended staying away a day or two, and I was surprised to see you. I didn't hear you come in last night."

"Probably not—I am not in the habit of kicking up a row when I am late; and although I was a bit screwed I had sense enough left to use my latch key without disturbing you. Is that explanation satisfactory?"

The man did not reply—his master was not in the habit of talking to him, and making sort of semi-exuses like this, and the departure puzzled him considerably.

"Bring me up a cup of coffee—strong, mind, and with a wineglass full of brandy in it," resumed his master. "I'm seedier than usual, and I want a pick-me-up—it was the champagne last night, I suppose, that gave me this confounded headache."

Dixon went down to execute the order, not without a little private wondering.

"This is rather a queer go!" he muttered to himself, while he made the coffee. "He certainly said he was going to W—shire yester-

day, and even had a few things packed together. What can have become of the bag I should like to know! Champagne doesn't often give him headaches either—he's too well accustomed to it; but, anyhow, he looks mortal bad this morning."

He certainly did look "bad." There were hollow circles under his eyes, and a peculiar wildness in his expression that was quite new to it; and, besides this, he seemed very nervous—glanced round in a furtive sort of manner at his valet, as if he feared being watched, and started violently at the least sound.

These movements were very unusual with him, for he was, as a rule, the least nervous of men.

He turned absolutely yellow when there came a sudden, sharp ring at the bell, and his hands clenched convulsively under the bedclothes as Dixon went out to answer the summons.

He returned, bringing with him a telegram, which he handed to his master, who hurriedly opened it.

"It was from Dr. Felton, and contained these words: 'Come down immediately. Your wife has run away, and we fear an accident has happened to her.'"

"Pack me up a couple of shirts, Dixon," he said, as the paper fell from his nerveless hand. "I am going to W—shire this morning—there is something wrong with my wife."

Dixon looked respectfully commiserating, but discreetly refrained from asking any questions concerning Lady Carlyon, being well aware that the subject was one to be tabooed.

"What shall I pack the shirts in, sir?" he asked. "You took your small Gladstone bag out with you yesterday, if you remember."

Sir Ascot started guiltily—the bag was at the bottom of the river, where he himself had thrown it, for fear of its being noticed in his hands, and leading to his identification in case awkward questions should be asked.

"Did I?" he said, with an assumption of carelessness. "To tell the truth, I Imlished so freely last night that I really have no idea what became of the bag—in fact, I had quite forgotten that I had it with me. You must find another for me to take to-day, and look sharp about it. I shall have to catch the twelve o'clock train from Paddington."

He caught it without any difficulty, and fifty times during the journey thanked Heaven it was an express. If it had been a slow train, stopping at every station, he told himself he should have gone mad, for his anxiety to beat Dr. Felton's, and learn how much was known or suspected of his wife's fate, made the journey seem interminable. He did not go to the station where he had alighted yesterday, having wired Dr. Felton to meet him at W—, which the physician accordingly did.

"Well!" he exclaimed, as he sprang from the carriage door, and was met by the doctor. "What news have you for me?"

"None, I am sorry to say," responded the other, who was as imperturbable as usual. "I told you in my message all that I could tell with certainty. Your wife's fate is at the present moment shrouded in mystery."

"You have not found her, then?"

"No, I have despatched messengers in every direction. I have communicated with the police; I have, in fact, done all that it is possible to do in such a case, and the only thing remaining is to wait until we gain news, which must be soon."

"When did she escape?"

"Last night."

"In what manner?"

"A most extraordinary one, and when I tell you, you will absolve me and the attendants of carelessness, for no one could have possibly imagined she was capable of such a deed of daring. Outside her rooms there is a cedar, but its branches do not reach the window by some feet; nevertheless, she jumped from the latter, and contrived to let herself down by means of the boughs. Then she must have scaled the wall, for she has left behind her the scarf that she

used in doing it. Of her subsequent movements we have no trace."

"But there must have been carelessness—gross carelessness!" exclaimed the Baronet, and Dr. Felton was astonished at his energy. "I sent an attendant with her."

"Who happened to be ill," interpolated his hearer, "and, as misfortune would have it, I was out last night myself. Still, you must not blame me, Sir Ascot; I believe I am as much put out over the matter as you are."

When they reached the house the Baronet was taken to see the rooms, and he could but wonder at the courage desperation had given the unfortunate girl. No one but a half-distraught woman would ever have attempted such a leap, and he could hardly accuse Dr. Felton of insufficient attention, for the most farseeing person would not have provided against such a contingency.

He had not been there very long before one of the gardeners came in, bringing with him a small soft shawl and a pocket-handkerchief. The latter bore in the corner the name "Alicia Carleton."

"I found this 'ankercher on some bushes close by the river, sir," he said, in hushed tones, as he gave the articles to his master; "and the little shawl was floating down the stream itself, but had been stopped by some piece of drift wood a little lower down. Both of 'em belonged to the poor lady, for there's her name on them." Dr. Felton exchanged a significant glance with Sir Ascot, who turned away as if to hide his agitation.

"I was afraid of this," he muttered, in low tones. "The river had better be dragged."

"I'm afraid it will be no use," said the doctor, shaking his head, "for just there the river is full of deep holes, and accidents have happened before now, and the bodies have never been recovered. Still, it shall be dragged, if you wish it."

The Baronet did wish it, and accordingly it was done, but with no result, except the finding of a russet leather purse that was identified with the other two things as having belonged to Lady Carleton.

Days passed on and no tidings came, and at last all doubt concerning her fate vanished. Evidently she had wandered from the high road down the path, and, misled by the darkness, had fallen into the river, and been drowned.

This is what people said, and what everyone believed; and paragraphs in the papers, announcing the sad fact, dwelt upon the grief of her husband, who had been most zealous in his endeavours to recover the body.

His efforts were useless, the river refused to yield up its dread secret, and by-and-by a tablet was placed in Cliffe Church to the memory of mother and son; and those who stopped to read the inscription sighed as they saw how young poor Alicia had been, and said it was pitiful to think of the two lives that had ended so tragically.

Well, perhaps it was better so—better they should be taken from a cold and cruel world to that bright land where "the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest!"

There was no one to dispute Sir Ascot's right to do as he liked with the Chase estates now. He could mortgage them, sell them even if he were so minded, for he was sole and undisputed master, and had not even his heir to consider.

Strange to say, he entirely altered his mode of life, paid his turf debts, sold his horses, and announced his intention of having nothing more to do with racing and betting.

Some of his friends laughed and tried to chaff him out of this novel frame of mind, but without success. Others said he had really cared for his wife, after all, and her loss had affected him to such an extent that all relish for amusements had died with her.

Whether this were so or not, it was undeniable that a great change had come over him; he had grown moody, restless, and irritable, and had the air of a person who is constantly on the look out for some impending calamity.

If he were in a room his eyes were always fixed on the door, and at each knock or ring it was

clear he had difficulty in restraining the start of alarm that seemed its natural sequence.

At other times a feverish and unnatural gaiety took possession of him, and his spirits grew absolutely boisterous in their exuberance—no mirth was too wild for him, no recklessness too extravagant—his one desire seemed to be to drown thought, and he cared little what means he took to accomplish it.

These fluctuations were observed by Dixon, his valet, with very considerable astonishment, for they were quite a novelty.

Hitherto Sir Ascot's temperament had seemed quiet and even enough; and although he had occasionally given way to irritability, it had been in a very different way to the present.

Dixon pondered over it a good deal, but, try as he would, he could not find the key to the mystery; so at last he gave it up, having come to the sage conclusion that only Time, which unfolds all things, would elucidate this.

CHAPTER XXX.

DR. FLETCHER, when he paid a visit to Esther Grant at Cliffe Court, was quite astonished at the progress she had made under the care of the young man who had attended her during his absence.

Not only was she much better in health, being, in fact, able to walk about alone, but her faculties had regained much of their lost power.

She could talk sensibly enough on ordinary subjects, and the only point in which she failed was her inability to recall the past with any certainty.

Fragments of memories came to her like parts of a waking dream, and floated about unconnectedly in her mind, but they were vague and shadowy, and had no thread between them.

"You have been doing wonders since I went away," observed Dr. Fletcher to his young assistant, whose name was Stone, "especially with regard to the woman at the Court, Mrs. Grant."

"I took an interest in the case, and studied it a good deal," was the reply, "and, to say the truth, I made some experiments with regard to it, which have been even more successful than I dared hope."

"Do you think she will ever recover her memory?"

"Most certainly I do; it is simply an affair of time and care. Of course, she is still in a somewhat precarious condition as regards her mental attitude, and a shock of any kind would undo all the good I have effected; but if she is guarded against this, I have every hope that she will entirely recover."

On consideration, Dr. Fletcher deemed it best that she should remain at the Court for a little time longer, in order that she might still be under the care of Mr. Stone, who he decided to keep with him as a permanent assistant; and he therefore wrote to Arline and Mrs. Carroll, both of whom acquiesced in the wisdom of his design.

The latter grew every day more and more interested in the drama of which Hubert Cliffe was the hero, and found it as difficult to restrain her impatience as did her young companion.

"Another day almost over, and no news from Hubert!" sighed Arline, who was sitting at the window, gazing out into the murky shadows of the fast closing night.

"I really think we ought to take some steps towards discovering his whereabouts," announced Mrs. Carroll, in a resolute tone, from her chair by the fire; "more than that—we will take the steps. A journey to London nowadays is nothing—different to what it was when I was young, and it took a week to accomplish, and a month to prepare for. If you do not have a letter by the next post we will start to-morrow morning, and stay in town until we hear of him. There! Do you feel more satisfied now?"

"Do you really mean it—are you in earnest?" exclaimed the young girl, excitedly, coming

over to her, and slipping on her knees on the rug.

"Certainly I do."

"How kind of you—how good!"

"Nothing of the sort, my dear. People when they get old are apt to grow selfish, and that I wish to guard against—sometimes I find it creeping on me, in spite of my efforts. I have money, and it behoves me to make what good use of it I can, for I have no relations to leave it to—unless Hubert Cliffe should prove to be one, as I sincerely hope he may. I am most anxious to see him. Describe him to me."

Arline had already done so several times, but the task was a labour of love, and she did not mind how often she repeated it. It was more than a pleasure to speak of Hubert—to try and limn his bright, debonaire face, his flashing blue eyes, and the kindly smile that lighted up his features. He was her ideal, her hero—her yellow-haired King Olaf, who had come to take captive her young heart, and who would reign there as long as she lived.

Under present circumstances, however, the mention of his name brought remembrances sufficiently saddening; and by-and-by she slipped quietly out of the room, and into the garden, where she walked slowly along the leaf-strewn paths, wondering, as she had wondered so many times before, what had become of him, and what was the reason of his silence.

"If I knew he were untrue to me the knowledge would kill me!" she whispered to herself, passionately, stopping short in her walk, and looking up at the darkening sky, where a few faint stars were beginning to quiver in the purple.

Just then she heard the click of the gate at the bottom of the walk, and she turned hastily, in some surprise, for it was too late for callers, and the servants' and tradespeople's entrance was on the other side of the house. Up the path a tall figure, wrapped in a big coat, was walking very slowly—a figure whose outlines, it seemed to her, were familiar.

She advanced a few steps, her heart beating very fast, and her hands clasped together over her bosom; then she uttered a little, half-strangled cry, and started forward—a minute after she was clasped in her lover's arms.

Yes, it was Hubert Cliffe, still weak, and hardly recovered from his recent illness, signs of which lingered in his white cheeks and languid demeanour. He had got Dolores to write to Dr. Fletcher for Arline's address, and the delay in receiving an answer to his letter was due to the fact of the doctor's absence. Directly he heard from him, and felt strong enough, he had come in person to explain his silence.

Arline's delight may better be imagined than described. She, too, had a long story to unfold, after hearing of Dolores and her goodness; but before telling it she took him in the house, and introduced him to Mrs. Carroll, who, as she shook hands with him, scanned his face very intently.

"He has blue eyes like poor Daisy's, but the rest of his features are quite dissimilar," she observed, much to the wonderment of the young man, who was, of course, ignorant of what she alluded to.

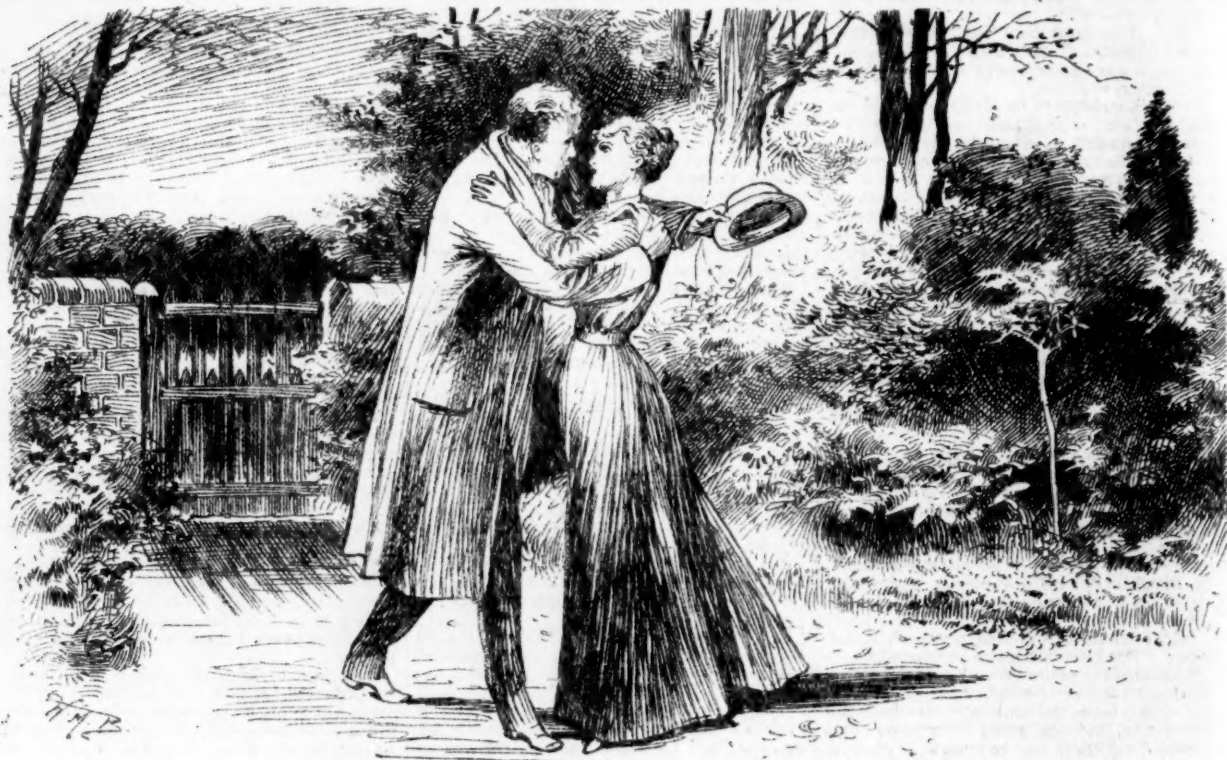
He was speedily informed, and put in possession of all that had happened since his departure from Cliffe—a recital which considerably excited him.

"So you see it is useless for you to go to Australia until you hear what information Esther Grant is in a position to give you," said Arline, as she finished.

"Certainly it is. You say she is better!"

"Much better—in fact, Dr. Fletcher thinks that in a few weeks her memory will come back. That is what he said in his last letter."

Then followed a long discussion as to his future plans; and it was finally decided that he should remain where he was for the present—that is to say, until he grew stronger, and better able to travel about, and in the meantime something might transpire with regard to the



SHE STARTED FORWARD, AND A MINUTE AFTER SHE WAS CLASPED IN HER LOVER'S ARMS.

mystery of Esther Grant's connection with the Cliffe.

Two or three days later, however, he grew too impatient to rest any longer quiescent, and in spite of Mrs. Carroll's and Arline's remonstrances set out for Cliffe, and arrived at Doctor Fletcher's late in the evening, just as the latter was indulging in his after-dinner nap.

"I am most rejoiced to see you!" exclaimed the master of the house, shaking hands with him very heartily. "I can't congratulate you upon your looks, though; you are still rather seedy, it is quite evident."

"Yes; but I shall soon get all right again now that I have taken the turn," responded Hubert.

The next morning he went with the doctor when he paid his usual visit to the Court, and was greeted very warmly by Mrs. Belton, who was most delighted to see him, and very anxious in her inquiries for Arline.

In a chair, close to the window of the house-keeper's room, sat Esther Grant; but as different looking from the miserable tramp who had accosted Arline as she was from the vacant-eyed invalid that Lady De Roubaix had helped to nurse.

Thin she was still, but she seemed bright and animated, and was neatly attired in a black dress of Mrs. Belton's, which had been altered to fit her. In her hands was a half-completed stocking, at which she was working swiftly and assiduously, even while she answered the doctor's inquiries.

"You are better again this morning?" he observed, seating himself opposite her.

"I get better every day, sir—thanks to all the kindness and attention I receive," she responded, gratefully.

"And the past—does that grow clear?"

She shook her head a little doubtfully.

"Almost, sir; but not quite. It seems to me that if I could be helped a bit I might remember.

But then, there's no one to help me by recalling the things that have happened to my mind."

"I don't know that, my good woman; perhaps I may have a deeper knowledge of your past than you imagine," said the doctor, rubbing his hands together, and hardly able to restrain his delight at hearing her suggest such a possibility. "I have asked you before if you remembered the name of 'Margaret Sumner,' haven't I?"

"Yes, sir, and I can't recollect it at all," she answered, putting her hand to her head, and knitting her brows. "At the same time it is familiar to me; it reminds me of the same things as the church bells that I heard on Sunday do."

"Try farther back; ask her if she remembers Mrs. Carroll," suggested Hubert, who was listening to the conversation very anxiously.

She caught the name, softly as it had been spoken.

"Carroll! Carroll!" she repeated, vaguely at first, and then with dawning recollection. "Why a Mr. and Mrs. Carroll used to live at the Glebe Farm, in W—shire, quite close to our old house, before we went to Australia. Oh! yes, I remember Mrs. Carroll perfectly—she was Daisy's aunt."

"Daisy—what—who?" questioned the doctor.

She looked at him thoughtfully, but did not reply.

"Try and think back," he resumed, coaxingly. "It is of great importance that you should remember who Daisy was. Stay, and I will help you! When you were a girl you lived in W—shire, at a place called Loring."

She nodded her head vigorously.

"Yes, yes, that is so! It was a long, low whitewashed house, with a verandah, and roses and honeysuckle climbing all over the porch. I think I can see it now!"

"And you had a brother and sister?"

"I had a father and mother as well, but they died."

"Well, and then you and your brother and sister went to Melbourne?"

"We did; because we were too poor to remain in England. My brother tried to keep on the farm, but he couldn't manage it, so it was sold; and then he said the best thing for us was emigration."

"And Daisy Sumner went with you?"

"Yes, she went with us to Melbourne."

The doctor waited anxiously, hoping she would continue, but this she seemed unable to do. Her memory responded when the chords were struck, but she herself appeared to have no power of evoking them unaided.

"What became of Daisy after her arrival in Melbourne?" he added, presently.

"I forget. It may come back to me sometime, but I can't remember now."

"Very well, I won't bother you more at present, but you must ponder the matter well over, and tell me the result in the morning," said the physician, rising; and presently he had taken his leave, and was walking with Hubert down the avenue that led from the Court.

"At all events, we have proved one thing—namely, that this woman is identical with the one Mrs. Carroll knew, and who sailed with her niece, and that is a good deal," he observed.

"It is indeed," acquiesced the young man.

"I am beginning to feel hopeful."

"You have every reason to be, for it is a matter beyond doubt that in a few days Esther Grant will be able to give us particulars of her former life, and all details connected with it."

(To be continued.)

A lady residing in California has patented a hat-holding device for opera chairs, which can be folded up against the bottom of the chair, having a flat tray suspended by means of a bellows-like arrangement, which allows it to drop down when the seat is brought into a horizontal position.



ALL HER HOPES FLED AS FLORENCE ENTERED THE DRAWING-ROOM.

HER GREAT MISTAKE.

CHAPTER I.

HER name was Florence, this slight, brown-eyed maiden, of whose mistake we are going to tell. It was not a family name among the Warburtons. It could not have been chosen from any fond associations with the fair Italian city, since neither Colonel Warburton nor his wife had ever been there. But when the eagerly-expected child proved to be a girl the young mother would hear of no other name, and so the Colonel, who loved her with an idolatrous, passionate tenderness, buried the name-honoured claims of the family "Janet" and "Agnes" in oblivion, thereby mortally offending his two sisters—and our heroine was called Florence.

That was more than eighteen years ago, and now she sat in a long, bare-looking apartment of a house at Kensington, which the globes, maps, and other educational implements scattered about pronounced to be a school-room.

Poor little Florence! That room was more familiar to her than any other. For fifteen years she had been an inmate of Miss Frost's establishment—for fifteen years home had been nothing to her but an empty name.

She could remember nothing of the life she led before she came to Kensington; only in her recollection there was a faint, faded image of a face lovelier and more tender than any she saw at Connaught House. That face must have been her mother's, through whose early death she began her school days so early.

She had nothing to complain of at Connaught House. The girls loved her, the governesses indulged her; the stately principal herself had kind looks for her favourite pupil, only it was school, not home; and when three times a year nineteen girls took their departure for the holidays, a kind of wild longing would seize the lonely twentieth that she, too, had some friends waiting to receive her.

But though invitations came sometimes from loving school-fellows, not one was Florence allowed to accept.

"It is your papa's wish," Miss Frost would explain, condescendingly. "Until he returns to England he desires you should make no acquaintance beyond your own family."

"But I haven't got any family," said Florence with a sigh.

The schoolmistress answered nothing. She herself was much perplexed that neither of Colonel Warburton's sisters took any notice of his daughter. They both resided a great part of the year in London; surely it would have been easy for them to call at Connaught House and inspect their niece's progress.

Regularly every half-year came handsome cheques for Miss Warburton's expenses, regularly once a month came a loving, tender letter from the father to his child, and the girl grew to regard those letters as her greatest pleasure. She learned to look forward with a yearning anxiety for the time when she should go out to India to her father.

It was an afternoon in the summer. One more week and the school-room would be deserted, its bright, girlish inmates would have flown for the holidays.

Florence Warburton, sitting near the open window, was the centre of attraction. It was the hour of recreation, and a group had gathered round their favourite.

"Promise you'll be here when I come back," said a little fair-haired child, nestling against Miss Warburton lovingly. "I couldn't bear this place without you!"

Florence smiled.

"I expect I shall be here. Miss Frost thinks papa won't care for me to go out to him before winter."

"And you really want to go to India?" cried half-a-dozen voices.

"I want to see papa. He is all I have, you know."

"But couldn't he come to England?"

"He doesn't like England, Miss."

"Well," said a tall, graceful girl, the beauty of the school, "one thing, Florence, Colonel Warburton won't keep you long. Girls marry directly in India."

"Do they?"

"Yes," went on the young mistress, "and they generally make good matches. I do wish I were you, Florence! Why you'll be a bride before the year is out!"

"I don't want to be married," said Florence, slowly. "It seems to me it would be very tiresome!"

Half-a-dozen eyes looked at her in amazement.

"Married people are so fussy," went on Florence; "and they always seem so full of bothers!"

"What married people have you seen?" asked Belle, a little scornfully. "Only sober fogies of fifty and sixty. It's very different when they're young."

"Is it?"

"Of course it is! The husband thinks of nothing but his wife. He loves her better than anything in the world, and is always trying to make her happy!"

Florence Warburton's face glowed.

"I should like that!" she said, wistfully. "To be loved like that would be better than being married!"

"You dreadful child!" cried Belle, reprovingly. "People mustn't be loved like that unless they are married, or going to be!"

They were interrupted. The door opened abruptly, and a servant entered.

"Miss Warburton is wanted to see visitors in the drawing-room."

Never since her father left her in Miss Frost's care, a little toddling child of three, had such an announcement been made to Florence. She started up in confusion, her cheeks still flushed by the recent conversation.

"Had I better change my dress, Belle?"

"No!" returned the beauty; "you couldn't"

look nicer than you do, white suits you wonderfully."

And indeed it would have been hard to find a sweeter face than Florence's. Isabel might be the beauty of the school, but she had not half her friend's charm of expression. The colonel's daughter was a slight, graceful girl, barely over middle height; her face was a perfect oval, her large, deeply set brown eyes were fringed with long dark lashes, contrasting well with the strange purity of her complexion; her cheeks had the faintest wild-rose bloom; her mouth was small and regular, and her little head was framed by masses of soft hair, whose hue was like nothing so much as the tint of a chestnut newly snatched from its shell. A creature once seen not easily forgotten; one surely formed for love and sympathy.

With feet which would hardly do her bidding, so nervous and excited had she become through the unexpected summons, Florence Warburton reached the drawing-room door; one hope, one wild desire uppermost at her heart—that her father had taken her by surprise, and come to England without warning.

Her hopes fled as she entered the drawing-room. Miss Frost sat in earnest conversation with a lady—a middle-aged woman, dressed in elegant mourning; a face which was best described by negatives, not large, not small, not stern, not placid, but with a strange restlessness in the small eyes, and a something of cunningness in the expression of well-bred calm. Miss Frost took her pupil's hand.

"Florence, this is your Aunt Janet, your father's elder sister, Mrs. Fox; she has come here to make your acquaintance."

The girl found her aunt's small, ferret-like eyes regarding her with close scrutiny; then Mrs. Fox advanced two fingers of her daintily-gloved hands. She never offered her niece a warmer salutation, and when the fingers had gone through the ordeal safely, she turned to Miss Frost, and said, speaking as calmly as though Florence were a lay figure that could neither hear nor feel,—

"Her mother's very image, not a trace of the Warburtons about her!"

The girl's lips dropped painfully. Miss Frost saw tears gathering in her velvety eyes.

"Miss Warburton is a very sweet girl, madam; I assure you, we shall all miss her. Perhaps you would like to be alone while you make the communication."

"By no means!" returned Mrs. Fox, graciously. "As we have never seen each other before, I can have no private confidences with my niece. How old are you?" to Florence, abruptly.

"Eighteen and a half!"

"Ah! when did you last hear from your father?"

"It is six weeks ago. There was no letter by the last mail. Oh! I'm alarmed by the look of pity Miss Frost cast on her. 'Oh! surely he is not ill! You have not come here to tell me that!'"

"He died some weeks ago, probably directly after the date of his last letter."

Dead! there came a sudden blank in Florence's vision, dead! then what mattered anything! He was her all, her very hope was bound up in him. Dead! oh, why did the summer sunshine pour through the window if indeed this misery had come upon her!

"Yes," returned Mrs. Fox, with that resignation we all feel for others' sorrow, "and you ought to be very thankful he was spared suffering. The end was quite sudden, and he was buried with full military honours. Your uncle has all the particulars at home, and you shall see them if you are a good girl."

Poor Florence, she tried to speak, to say something; but she could not, the words stuck in her throat. It mattered little, Mrs. Fox was fully capable of sustaining the conversation.

"Of course your position is sadly changed by this event. Your circumstances are quite altered."

"Yes! I am all alone now."

"That is a very ungrateful remark, my dear. You have two aunts, an uncle, and several

cousins. It would be absurd to pretend regret for a father you have never seen for fifteen years."

Florence felt it all the same.

"Your uncle is appointed your guardian," went on Mrs. Fox; "and until you come of age your home will be with us. Of course this is very generous on our parts, for the provision to which you are entitled is next to nothing."

Miss Frost, who knew something about officers' pay and the allowance made to their children, doubted this; she interposed and said, kindly, she would gladly keep Florence at Connaught House and assist her in earning her own living.

Mrs. Fox stared.

"You mean well, my dear madam, but it is impossible. Colonel Warburton's daughter can only accept charity from her kindred. My husband and myself are quite willing to accept the burden my brother has bequeathed to us. I will write and appoint a day for my niece to join us at our country seat; and I trust, Florence, I shall then find you in a more dutiful state of mind."

She shook hands with Miss Frost and called from the room. The principal turned to Florence with a sigh.

"My dear child, I am so sorry for you."

Such a word was an old maid, but she had a large store of human kindness in her heart. Sitting down beside the trembling girl, she comforted her after her own fashion.

"And so that is your aunt, my child; I have often wondered she never came to see you. It puzzled me too, that, being so young, your father did not leave you with her instead of sending you to school; but I understand it now."

"Oh, how am I to live with her? It will be dreadful! Dear Miss Frost, won't you let me stay with you?"

"The power all rests with your aunt, Florence; her husband is your guardian, and for the next two years and a half he has the absolute right to choose your home."

Florence was sobbing bitterly.

"I was so happy, only this morning, so happy and full of hope, and now I am alone in the world and—a beggar!"

"Hush," said Miss Frost, solemnly, "you are not that; you may be poor in comparison with others, but I am positive your father has left you enough to pay Mrs. Fox for the expense of keeping you; if not, child, I don't believe she would insist upon having you."

There was grief and wailing throughout Connaught House; not even the near prospect of the holidays could console the young ladies for the loss of their favourite; woeful anticipations of school "without Florence" filled every heart. No one could remember a time when that slim, girlish figure had not made the sunshine of the stately academy.

Miss Frost was not idle. She had always provided Florence with a toilette suitable to a gentleman's daughter; she now procured a simple tasteful mourning outfit, ladylike and becoming, though not extravagant. She had a kind of idea that, if she left this office to Mrs. Fox, Florence would come off indifferently in the matter of clothes. She knew that she would never be forgiven for this expenditure, and that no attempt would be made to reimburse her; but she did not grudge the money. She was a prosperous woman, and she loved Florence Warburton dearly.

A short note arrived from Mrs. Fox appointing a day on which her niece was to proceed to Foxgrove Court, the family place in Kent. She sent no money for the journey, she made no mention of any escort.

Miss Frost's blood fairly boiled; she would have sent a maid with Florence, only she feared to provoke her aunt's anger; so she drove to the station, and herself confided Miss Warburton to the care of a guard, ascertained the places at which she would have to change, and otherwise provided for her comfort; this done she hurried back to Connaught House to keep an appointment.

"The train starts in five minutes, dear," was her farewell. "I wish I could wait to see

you off, but I'm afraid of being late for Lady Dolany."

She was gone. Left alone, poor Florence leant back in her corner, and wished herself back in the house, which for fifteen years had been her home. The bell rang, a shrill whistle sounded, the train was on the point of starting, when a late passenger appeared, and the guard, abruptly forgetting all his promises respecting Florence's seclusion, flung open the door of her carriage, which was nearest, and tumbled in the new comer just as the train steamed slowly out of the platform.

Florence Warburton was too wrapped up in her own sad thoughts to notice her companion; and he, utterly reproaching himself for the tardiness which had lost him a seat in a smoking compartment, was quite as neglectful of her, and seated himself as far as possible from her, while he tried to obtain amusement from *Punch*.

But *Punch* does not take long to read. In half-an-hour the traveller had exhausted both that and the *Globe*, then he thought himself of his fellow-passenger. Her face was still averted from him, but there was something in the unstudied grace of her attitude, in the childlikeness of her pose, which aroused his interest. He drew a chair nearer, meaning to commence the acquaintance by offering her *Punch*, when he discovered she was crying.

There was no mistake about it; he could see the tears wending their way slowly down her cheeks; he could see the heaving of her bosom. Cecil Fane's first impulse was to curse the ill-luck which gave him such a companion; his second to try to rouse her from grief.

He was quite young, barely five-and-twenty, a handsome warm-hearted young fellow, just a little spoilt by prosperity and the sunshine of wealth; but still generous and open as the day, a man who might flirt with London belles, and say pretty things to burlesque actresses; but who would never injure a woman who trusted him, and never break a promise to a creature weaker than himself.

"What is the matter?"

Florence started. The voice was rich and musical, the tone low, and almost caressing. She started in confusion. What had she done? What offence could she have been guilty of, that a strange gentleman should address her thus unceremoniously?

Cecil had utterly forgotten the code of etiquette.

"You mustn't cry!" he said, very gently, and taking her hand; "I can't bear to see you!"

"I am very sorry!" she answered; "only I can't help it! I am so miserable!"

She was sitting up now, and he could see her face, a sweet, childish face, with big brown eyes, and a strange charm of its own in spite of the tear-stains on her cheeks.

"What is the matter?" he repeated again; and then his eyes rested on her black dress.

Florence answered nothing; she wiped her eyes, and tried to turn her face away from his gaze.

"I think I understand," said Cecil, who felt remarkably awkward in his new rôle of comforter. "You have lost someone dear to you?"

"I have lost my father, and he was all I had in the world!"

"But crying won't bring him back!" said Mr. Fane; "and I dare say you have other friends left!"

She shook her head.

"He was all I had; and that is not all—he died far away in India. I never knew anything about it until they told me he was dead. Fancy, while I was looking for his letters he was lying in his grave!"

Cecil took one of the little hands in his carelessly.

"Do you know, I have just come from India. Was your father in the army? Perhaps I knew him."

"He was colonel in the 92nd Regiment," Fane started.

"You don't mean you are poor Warburton's daughter?"

"Indeed, I am! Oh! sir, did you know him?"

"I knew him well! He was the kindest friend I had in the five years I spent in India. I assure you, Miss Warburton, but for him I might be dead, too, instead of coming home on sick leave to rejoice my mother's heart! He nursed me through a dangerous illness as tenderly as if I had been his brother."

A strange brightness came into her eyes.

"I am so glad to see anyone who knew papa!"

"And you are the little girl the colonel used to speak of—that he expected out next spring?"

"Yes! Oh, it seemed so cruel! I had counted the months and years so long!"

"It was a blow to me when I heard the news," Cecil said, simply, "though I was prepared for it!"

"Prepared! They told me it was a sudden death!"

"Sudden at last, perhaps. Miss Warburton, may I tell you something that may soothe your sorrow? Your father had been slowly dying for years. I have heard people say he never recovered your mother's loss—that her death killed him slowly, but surely. Grief took fifteen years to do its work; but if you ask me my opinion, the colonel died of a broken heart. He never could have been happy in this world. He was a good man and ready for the next. If ever death ought not to be mourned over that death was his!"

Florence looked into the young man's face, and said, wistfully,—

"It may be selfish, but, oh, I cannot feel as you do! You see he was all I had!"

"Surely you have relations!"

"I have an aunt. I am going to her now, but she does not love me."

"She must love you in time. Miss Warburton, you must be dear to many people for your own sake and many others; my mother, among them, will love you for your father's."

"I should like to see your mother," said Florence, sadly. "Oh, I wish I had a mother!"

"My mother lives at Westfield, and I am sure she will be delighted to see you."

For the first time her face brightened, giving him a faint idea of what it might have been unaimed by sorrow.

"Why, I am going to Westfield! My aunt lives only three miles off."

"Then I expect she is a friend of ours. May I know her name?"

"Mrs. Fox. She lives at Foxgrove Court."

"Of course I know her. We have been intimate for years. Then we shall be neighbours for some little time, Miss Warburton; and you will try and look on me as a friend, for your father's sake!"

"Indeed, I will," said Florence, softly.

"My mother, Lady Emily Fox, will be glad to be your friend, too," said Cecil. "I expect she will ask your aunt to spare you to us a great deal."

"Won't you please tell me something about my aunt, Mr. Fox? Has she many children?"

"Half-a-dozen. But some of them are not children; the eldest son is as old as I am. Then there are three young ladies 'out,' and two little girls in the school-room."

"Only one son?"

"Only one; the hope and pride of your aunt's life. She thinks the whole world might be reached through in vain to find the equal of John Warburton Fox!"

Florence laughed, as he meant she should.

"Then you don't like him?"

"I never said so."

Cecil Fox succeeded in his object. He managed to make the hours of that long journey pass pleasantly for Florence Warburton. He warmed the sad, lonely girl in the sunshine of his own kind, genial manner. He gave her just that protection a timid, inexperienced traveller requires, and directed her thoughts so well that

the monotony of the flat, uninteresting country was hardly felt; and when the train stopped at Westfield she said,—

"Already!"

It was a small rural station, with but two or three persons waiting on the platform. Cecil handed Florence out, and then she saw him clasped in the arms of a stately, silver-haired old lady, and heard a sweet voice bidding him welcome home. She knew he had been away five years; not for worlds would she have interrupted the rapture of that reunion. Only she stood there alone, unnoticed, with an aching sense of solitude and pain at her heart which increased when she turned her eyes towards Lady Emily and her son.

The station-master came up to her, and asked civilly where she wished the luggage sent. Florence answered she was going to Foxgrove Court. The man shook his head. There was a grand flower-show the other side of the Court. He had seen Mrs. Fox and the young ladies driving to it; no doubt they had forgotten to send to meet the London train.

Poor Florence stood in doubt and perplexity. "I could walk," she said, hopefully; "but then there's the luggage."

"That's easily managed, miss. The carrier's cart's here, he goes right past Foxgrove Court. It's a longish walk, but I don't see how else you are to get there."

But before she had done more than point out her luggage, she felt a hand upon her shoulder.

"I am afraid your aunt has forgotten to send the carriage, Miss Warburton; my brougham is here, you must let me take you home."

"But"—Florence looked as if she would like to accept—"it will be troubling you so."

"No trouble at all," returned Lady Emily.

"Our horses is on the road to Foxgrove; we will get out there and send you on to the Court."

It spoke much for the delicacy of mother and son, that never by word or sign did they mention their own joy. They devoted themselves entirely to their little guest until the carriage stopped, and they said good-bye.

"If only Aunt Fox were like Lady Emily," thought Florence, wistfully, "I could love her dearly."

The Court was a substantial red-brick building, bearing about it signs of ample means, though none of exaggerated wealth.

A servant received Miss Warburton from Lady Emily's carriage, and asked her civilly enough if she would like some tea; being tired and hungry, Florence accepted; but the weak, lukewarm fluid which presently appeared, flanked by a thick slice of bread and butter, was very different to the fare enjoyed at Connaught House, and our heroine did not do justice to it.

Mary, the maid, stood waiting to show her her room—up the grand staircase, down a long corridor, and then upstairs again to a dreary, white-washed region, where no attempt at decoration or adornment seemed to have been made. The passage was quite bare, the doors simply numbered in black paint to distinguish them from each other. Florence's heart sank within her as Mary pushed one open.

A moderate-sized apartment, whose roof and walls sloped to such an extent that in many places it was impossible to stand upright, and which was destitute of fireplace and window, being lighted only by a skylight. A small iron camp-bedstead, a washstand with a small looking-glass hanging over it, and one solitary chair, such was the accommodation prepared by Mrs. Fox for her brother's only child.

Fortunately, Lady Emily had insisted upon Florence's luggage coming on her carriage, and it was soon brought up. Mary, touched by the desolation of the young girl's arrival, placed the trunks to their best advantage, and even offered her aid in unpacking; but this the orphan declined.

"Can you tell me when I shall see my aunt?" "Mrs. Fox is expected at seven, miss, and dinner is at half-past."

Florence looked at her watch; it was barely five. She had time to look at her watch; it was barely

"I had better go downstairs when I am ready!" she said, impulsively.

"I should think so, miss. There is no one at home but Mr. John."

Florence looked so perplexed that the servant explained,—

"The young master, miss, Mr. John Warburton Fox. We call him Mr. John."

Heartick and weary as she was, Florence knew she must not give way. Occupation was her best friend; so she unpacked her possessions, arranging her treasures so as to give a home-like air to her humble room. Then she bathed her face in cold water, and felt unspeakably refreshed. In fact, by the time her hair was brushed and rolled round her graceful head, she was quite a different creature.

She had never expected much kindness at her aunt's hands, so she had no reason to feel disappointed, and at least the day had brought her two new friends, of whose very existence she was ignorant when she rose in the morning.

Florence Warburton then went downstairs in search of the drawing-room.

She opened at least three doors before she was successful; then she found herself in a handsome apartment, furnished with more magnificence than good taste. There were no books about—none of those nameless trifles which show a room is inhabited by people of refinement and breeding. The most homelike thing which greeted Florence's eyes was a grand piano which stood open as though inviting her to come and try it.

There was no one in the house, Mary had said (Miss Warburton forgot Mr. John), so why should she not play to herself?

Florence sat down and struck a few chords. She had a real talent for music, and the sounds she evoked were very different from what that piano usually brought forth.

They seemed so to Mr. John in his distant smoking-room; besides, no one at the Court played the piano at that hour.

His curiosity was aroused, and he found his way to the drawing-room just as Florence, gaining confidence, began to sing.

Mr. John Warburton Fox—Tony as he was called in the bosom of his family—felt much surprised. He knew that his mother expected a "poor relation" as a sort of governess to the children. He had even heard that very day fixed for her coming; but he never connected that fact with the brilliant vision at the piano—the slight graceful girl who looked like some fair princess in her soft, black draperies, and whose hair shone like a golden cloud.

He stared in silent amazement till the song ended—then he went forward.

"I was not aware my mother expected visitors," he began, in his most affected manner. "I am sure she will be desolated that she was not at home to receive you."

Florence saw a small, badly-formed man, considerably under middle height, dressed in the extreme of fashion, with the reddest complexion, the sandiest hair, and the weakest, most watery blue eyes it had ever been her fate to meet.

He was in her aunt's drawing-room—he spoke of his mother, and yet it never dawned upon Miss Warburton that he was her cousin. There was something about him which told the girl he was not quite a gentleman; and as yet she did not know that Mr. Fox's whole fortune had been made in a retail business, of which distinguished undertaking he continued to accept the profits, though he had long ceased to take an active part in the enterprise.

"May I not be allowed," began Tony, waxing more florid in his compliments, "to know the name of our beauteous guest, to learn whose dulcet voice has enraptured my fancy?"

"I don't understand," said Florence, bluntly; "you can't be Aunt Janet's son!"

"Indeed I am,"—then as the truth dawned on him, "and you must be the little cousin we are expecting to-day!"

"I am Florence Warburton."

Before she understood his object he was close beside her.

"Cousins are like sisters, you know," said Tony, insinuatingly. "You're a pretty little

thing—give me a kiss to show you're glad to see me.

His lips were near hers—she could feel his hot breath on her cheeks. Barring with indignation, the girl brought her fair white hand down upon the ears of John Warburton F.X. with all the force she could muster.

"How dare you!" she cried; "how dare you insult me!"

"Insult you, indeed!" cried Tony, fiercely. "I was only giving you an affectionate welcome; come, you little vixen!"

"What is the meaning of this conduct, Miss Warburton? Mr. Fox and I shall indeed regret our charity if this is how you reward us!"

In the doorway stood Mrs. Fox. She had returned from the flower-show and reached the drawing-room in time to hear Florence's passionate protest, and to see her raise her hand against Tony. Fery fairly beamed in Mrs. Fox's ferret-like eyes. She literally hissed out the words as she repeated her question.

"What do you mean by it, eh, miss! A nice way you must have been brought up if you can't be left alone ten minutes without trying to inveigle the heir of an honourable family. I am ashamed of you! Go to your own room at once!"

The greater part of this speech was Greek to Florence Warburton. One part only did she understand—the permission to retire, and that she obeyed at once, leaving Tony still rubbing his injured member, and his mother almost speechless from indignation.

CHAPTER II.

SOMEWHERE in the heart of London, within half-an-hour's walk of the most fashionable regions, there lies a vast district which has never been properly explored—and probably never will be—where it is an almost unheard-of thing for any one house to be tenanted by less than three or four families, and where one room is considered quite sufficient for all ordinary purposes.

All classes, all grades are represented in the district I speak of. It has not the squalid misery of the East-end; but it has even more pitiable distress, for the great feature of the locality is keeping aloof.

Lawyer's clerks, ballet-dancers, cheap educational drudges, lone widows, the failures of every walk of life find a refuge here. Those who were rich once—those who never expected to be poor come and find a shelter secure, that, so long as their rent is paid, no questions will be asked, and no one come to trouble their solitude.

Such a place was Caroline-street, one of the numerous offshoots of the district we have named. It may have been called after the unlucky consort of George IV., it may have been called after a sweetheart of the builder. It had been new and imposing once; it was old and respectable now.

You might have wandered down Caroline-street at any hour of the day or night, and no harm would have happened to you; but you might have known every inhabitant of the dingy thoroughfare, and not have been able to produce one who at some time past or present had not known the grip of hunger.

No. 45 was about the middle of the street—a house remarkable for its dingy chocolate colour, and an extreme scarcity of curtains; yet the rooms were large and lofty, and you might have driven a horse-and-six up the staircase had such been your royal will and pleasure.

No. 45 had many inhabitants, but our business is exclusively with the third floor back, which was let to a woman of the name of Daw. History had never revealed whether she was married or single—wife, maid, or widow; she had been a lady once, that was an accepted fact in Caroline-street. She was an honest soul, who never refused a kindness or did anyone an ill-turn, that was another; but how she came to sink to her present condition—in what peculiar form trouble had come to her—these were questions Caroline-street felt powerless to answer.

She sat at her rickety table one bright summer

afternoon, working busily at her ceaseless stitching. Miss Daw was a machinist by calling, a slender, fragile-looking woman, with the remains of great beauty, and the unmistakable stamp of refinement on her face. In looking up from her work her eyes fell upon an old newspaper, in which the material entrusted to her had been wrapped; those wandering eyes rested for a moment upon the column of the *Times*.

Only a moment; but it changed her whole life and the current of this story. With one passionate cry the woman pushed her work away from her, buried her face in her hands and burst into a fit of sobbing—all the more bitter because it was so quiet and voiceless, that it had all the silence of despair.

"Dead!" she moaned, as she grew calmer—"dead! Oh, my darling, it can't be. After waiting and hoping, after living on through all this misery just for the chance of seeing your face again, it can't be that you are gone!"

Again her eyes sought the paper, and again the much-loved name stood forth in cruel distinctness among the long list of the departed. The woman dropped the paper with a bitter cry.

"A curse upon the woman whose lies parted us!—a curse upon the pride which kept me from justifying myself while he could have heard me! Oh, my darling!"—and she stretched forth her hand, as though appealing to some human creature listening—"Oh, my darling, at last you know the truth! You're beyond the shadows now, my darling, and you know your Doris loved you as her own life!"

It was long before she grew quite calm, long before she could see clearly to go on with the work which formed her only means of living, but at last she managed it. She worked her machine as fast as usual, she got through her usual amount of work; only, though there was nothing to show it, nothing to tell it, she was a changed woman. She had got up that morning with a hope at her heart, living in faith, she went to bed with a blank despair. But sleep, the comfort of the sorrowful, took the poor outcast under her own protection; her weary head had no sooner touched the pillow than she had forgotten all her weariness, all her woes—ay, even the cruel blow dealt her by fate that very day.

She fell asleep, and dreamed she was far away from Caroline Street—far away from the sordid struggle for daily bread. She saw herself in a beautiful foreign country, dressed in silks and laces such as she had been wont to wear so long ago, and the one she best loved stood at her side, with a fair young girl on his arm.

"I leave her to you, Doris," said the voice she knew so well, "you'll guard our child and bring her to me later on."

The day had dawned when Miss Daw woke from her dream, the sun was shining into the miserable room; it touched the woman's cheek with a faint colour, it gave a golden radiance to the faded hair; and, still more, Heaven's sunshine gave another hope to the troubled heart—gave a new incentive to live on.

"I shall see him some day," thought Doris, as she dressed herself,—"some day, when no clouds can separate us; and, for the rest, it's like a message from the grave. I'll go and try. I've been there often and seen her face, but I never dared to speak to her before. It seemed like casting a shadow over her young life; but now he's told me it's different, and I'll go."

It was September, the loveliest of summer months when bright and warm—and this was an ideal September, when the days had all the warmth and gladness of July. All through that weary morning Miss Daw worked with redoubled speed; she hardly paused for dinner, but ate her slice of bread-and-butter between the exigencies of the machine; then at three o'clock she stopped, folded away her work, and prepared to go out.

She tied on a shabby black bonnet, she fastened a rusty shawl—it said much for her that there was nothing revolting in her poverty; her dress was worn and threadbare, but there were no holes in it; her collar was white and spotless as soap could make it; and her complexion was clear and delicate—fragile from hard work and close con-

finement, but not marred by discolouration or coarseness from drink.

She locked the door of her room, put the key in her pocket, and started.

Miss Daw's usual walks were to the City, whence she fetched her work and whither she carried back when completed, but this afternoon she turned in quite a different direction. She walked on and on until the narrow streets and courts were left behind, and she stood in the broad, handsome thoroughfare we know as Piccadilly. London was well-nigh empty, there were no hindrances to her walk—no crowds of carriages, no gatherings of people—she walked on and on until her feet almost sank under her, and each step she took grew slower.

"This will never do," murmured the poor creature, "I shall be too late. I must make haste. I am doing his will—that ought cheer me on."

And so, redoubling her efforts, banishing all thought of pain and weariness, the tired, patient, world-tossed wanderer walked on—on and on, without stopping until she reached the old Court suburb of Kensington.

(To be continued.)

A ROSE OF MAY.

—201—

(Continued from page 392.)

"You have given my son his freedom!"

"I have, believing it to be for his good; but should he find life empty without me, that I am indeed necessary to him, I will hold on no longer. I am wealthy now, and all I have should be his. On the other hand, Sir John, if he feels it wisest and best to forget our mutual vows I shall neither reproach nor remind him of them. In all things I would act for his good."

She went into Ann Judd's room then, not daring to say more, lest her courage should fail her; and Sir John lay thinking over her words, and fighting with a pride which was so dominant a feature in his character.

At dusk Mr. Strong visited him. He looked very tall and stalwart standing there in the dim light, and his voice was unnaturally stern and low.

"You sent for me, Amory. What is your business with me?"

"Sit down. You won't! Ah, well, have your own way. Of course I wanted to thank you for your hospitality and the good nursing I have received."

"Your thanks are due to Miss Strong, not to me," in the same hard tone. "There is no man I am so unwilling to serve as yourself."

"I know it, and it is natural, I suppose. But put yourself in my place. Were Roy your son, would you care for him to marry a girl whose mother was an—"

"Silence! I loved her, and at least for her innocent child's sake leave her sin unspoken. In my blindness I believed that the old saying, 'like mother, like daughter,' would be again verified, but I am ashamed now that I could harbour any suspicion of one so good, so pure as my Yolande. Do you wonder that I am disconcerted to you! that all my manhood rises in bitter protest against you?"

"No, I don't," Sir John answered, frankly; "it is very natural. The girl is as good as she is beautiful. I think she could not lie, and would not lend herself to any deceit. And in sending for you I had a purpose. Strong, I will no longer oppose Roy's marriage. Give me pen and paper, and I'll write the young dog to come home. I want my son," and here his voice faltered. But, ashamed of his emotion, he added quickly, "Don't tell the jade I have come to my senses. I want to give her a pleasant surprise."

He wrote a few words hastily, and then turning to Mr. Strong, said,—

"Read this, and tell me if it suits you:—

"Come home at once, Roy; I am tired of our estrangement. You may marry a sweep's daughter if you like, so long as you celebrate the ceremony in England."

Strong smiled.

"It has one merit: it is very laud."

The elder man glanced shamefacedly at him.

"Will you shake hands?"

"With all my heart. You have made me eternally your debtor."

After this Sir John began to mend rapidly, and his manner towards Yolande grew so tender and courteous that, against her will, the girl began to regard him with affection.

Sometimes he was tempted to tell her of Roy's coming when he saw how pale and slender she had grown, but always he checked the impulse.

"I'll give her a grand surprise," he thought; "and Roy must be well on his way home."

Yes, each day brought the young man nearer to his native land, but not at all in obedience to Sir John's summons, which, indeed, he had never received, having started for England on receipt of Mr. Strong's letter.

"She shall not ruin her life and mine," he thought. "My beautiful darling! could you think so poorly of me as to fancy I would take my freedom!"

He was very confident that he should win her to listen to his prayer, and, in consequence, was so lighthearted, so full of life, so ready to help one and all that he was speedily a favourite with both passengers and crew.

The wild free life of the past three years had brought into force all his nobler qualities, until in the frank bronzed face one read courage and determination, as well as good nature.

He was broader and more manly, too, in appearance; his voice was hearty and resolute, and his whole frame seemed instinct with strong, jubilant life.

A lover to be proud of! Ah, yes, for since first he looked on Yolande's sweet face no other woman had claimed a thought from him, and for purity of morals he was a very Galahad.

Sir John Amory sat alone in the smoking-room of Amory Hall. He leaned his head upon his hand, and gazed moodily into the fire.

"Can anything have happened to him?" he thought. "It is strange I have had no reply. Will he come without writing, or is he too angry with me to forgive me?"

The old man looked worn and troubled; and, in his heart, he acknowledged there was small wonder that Roy was bitter against him.

"And yet I acted for his good as I believed. How could I know this girl was so worthy his love! How could I guess her beauty was not her only charm! Oh, my son! oh, my son! if you would but return! Was I ever harsh to you save this once! Did I ever deny you any gift—any wish save this!"

He heard a sound in the hall, and started to his feet. Whose was that step, that ringing voice!

"Roy! Roy!" he said, in a husky whisper. "Oh, thank Heaven he has come at last."

He rose to meet the long-lost son. He advanced a few steps, then stood with his hands resting on a table, trembling like a weak woman. The door opened, and a tall young fellow stood before him; so much nobler, so much more self-confident than the youth who had left him in anger, that he could scarcely believe it was Roy he saw.

But the same sunny hair waved above the bronzed brow, the same honest blue eyes were bent upon him, only they were full of pain and condemnation now.

The old man stretched out his hand.

"Roy!" he faltered, "haven't you a word for me!"

The handsome face changed and softened, but he did not attempt to take his father's hand.

"Father," he said. "You think that my coming means I give in to your wishes, that I

will consent to resign Yolande. It does not. Knowing all her goodness, all her worth, I will go to her and never leave her until I have wrung a promise from her to marry me at once. Father, I loved, and love you; but she is first. For her I am willing to give up all, home, country, friends—"

"Stay, Roy! Why should you give up everything! Marry her if you will, but do not leave me."

Roy looked dashed.

"Do you mean that, at last, you consent!" he asked.

"Yes, yes. Don't humble the old man any more, my boy; he is heartily ashamed of his pig-headedness." And something like a sob shook Sir John's voice as his son caught and clasped his hand close to his own. And surely it was no shame to Roy that his blue eyes were dimmed with sudden tears.

"Sit down, boy!" said the father, when each had mastered his emotion. "Sit down and let me explain things to you. You know the morning before I met with my accident (it has lamed me for life) I went to Stowe, and saw that poor girl alone. I was very hard with her, believing she knew her mother's shameful story, and was anxious to shelter herself under our ancient and honourable name. I bade her think of the stain upon her, and then realised for the first time that she was really ignorant of the story."

"Well, I was brute enough to tell it her in the bluntest way possible. I shall never forget the look she turned on me; and angry as I was with her for having won your affections, I felt very guilty and uncomfortable as I went from the Manor."

"Then came my accident, and Strong did violence to his own feelings when he received me into his house. She (your Rose of May) nursed me with untiring kindness, but made no attempt to win my favour; showed me no more attention than she gave the poor little maid in the adjoining room. And I can assure you I was very trying. I plagued her in every imaginable way, and tried to imagine faults where there were none."

"To the last I never told her I regretted my conduct, that I had written you to come home and marry the woman of your choice. Roy, can you ever forgive me! Perhaps, when you remember that all I did was (as I believed) for your welfare, you will not find it so very hard."

"Dear father, let there be no talk of forgiveness between us," Roy answered, eagerly. "I was in fault too. I remember some very bitter words I said at our last meeting, and I guess it is a case of 'pot and kettle.' Suppose we agree to bury the past, never by word or look to rake it up." And he stretched out his hand once more.

The next morning, when father and son sat together at breakfast, the former said,—

"I suppose you will be off to Stowe by the eleven-fifteen this morning?"

"Yes, if you can spare me. I confess I shall know no peace until I have seen Yolande."

Sir John sighed.

"I expected nothing else. It is only natural you should be all eagerness to meet her, but it is natural, too, for me to feel some envy of her great good fortune. You see, she has taken my place, and is first with you now."

"It is an experience most fathers get," gently; "but you must remember there will be two to care for you now in lieu of one. Yolande will not only be easily appeased, but easily won by your kindness."

"I hope so. Well, well, boy, you have waited long enough for your bride. I will not keep you longer from her."

An hour later, Roy looked into his father's room.

"I'm off now, dad! Wish me good luck," with a happy laugh. "If all goes well—and I feel it will—I shall be with you again in a couple of days, and shall not come alone. I'll prevail on Strong and that pretty old maid to share our journey, and we'll have a splendid house-warming. Good-bye," and so he was gone.

He walked to the station, which was but three minutes' journey from Amory Hall, and folks turned to look at the tall, strong figure, the happy, honest face.

A great many did not recognise him as he swung by, and he was too much engrossed with his own thoughts to care who came or went. The words of a poem he had read long ago rang through his brain.

"A girl with eager eyes and yellow hair,

Waits me there,
In the turret whence the chariot wheels caught soul
For the goal,
When the King looked where she looks now,
Breathless, dumb,
Till I come."

"When I do come she will speak not, she will stand
Tether hand.

On my shoulder, give her eyes the first embrace
Of my face,
Ere we rush, ere we extinguish sight and speech,
Each on each."

Counted by miles, the journey from Amory Hall to Stowe was a mere bagatelle, but by his heart's impatience it exceeded in length even his voyage to the Antipodes.

The train stopped at every station, and it seemed to Roy would never go on again. His fellow-passengers regarded him curiously and amusedly; such impatience pointed him out to them as a probable bridegroom.

But to their disappointment no fair-faced girl met him on the little platform at Stowe, and, indeed, no one appeared to recognize him. So he swung out of the station, and one lady remarked to another,—

"What a splendid-looking young fellow! I wonder who he is!"

"And what his errand," laughed the other.

"He didn't appear anxious enough for an undeclared suitor. He is probably on a visit to his lady love."

Roy walked quickly along the high road, and came at last to the borders of Stowe Park. The hedges were carefully trimmed now, the fences unbroken; a herd of deer scudded across the grass as he swung open the gate and entered.

He was at once accosted by Mead, and having informed him his errand was to Miss Strong was allowed to pass on, up the broad drive, now so carefully kept, and through the still fragrant garden.

A solemn functionary admitted him and led him to one of Yolande's reception-rooms, through the windows of which he could see the Rosery.

And there, her hands full of the last roses of the year, walked Yolande, talking to her father.

He grew sick and faint with sudden excess of joy; his face went white as a frightened woman's, and his heart beat so loudly it seemed to echo through the room. By a fierce effort he conquered his emotion, and stepping through a French window, softly spoke one word,—

"Yolande."

She stood quite still (while Mr. Strong discreetly retired), and her eyes were full of a great, unspeakable gladness. She could not move, she could not speak; she only felt he had returned to her, that neither time nor her own and story, not even the fact that she had given him his freedom, could quench the love he bore her.

"What, not a word, sweetheart!" he said, smiling down at her, "not one little word! Oh! foolish girl, to believe I would take my freedom."

He drew her into the house, and folding her to his loyal heart, kissed her again and again in a passion of love.

"Oh, Roy! Roy!" she whispered, in a breathless way, "is it really you! I can hardly believe the evidence of my own eyesight. Oh, love! love! this is too good to be true. I shall wake and find—"

"Me a shadow," with a joyous laugh, "and such a substantial one, too! Stand back, sweetheart, and let me look well at you. How pale you have grown, you poor, sweet Rose of May! What a conceited fellow I shall be, for of course pallor and the shadow I saw on your beauty were alike for me."

Then—well then, there followed the usual low-toned converse, explanations, caresses, and

mutual promises of constancy, and they started apart very guiltily when Mr. Strong entered the room.

It wanted but a few days to Yolande's wedding, and Miss Rance sat alone in the breakfast room; her face was very sad, and her pretty eyes were heavy with unshed tears.

"When she is gone I must go too. No one will want me then; there will be nothing for me to do, no reason why I should stay," and she sighed as she spoke.

"Wrong, wrong, all wrong, Ada," said Rolf Strong's voice, and he came and stood beside her. "When Yolande is gone I shall need you more than ever I did, and it will be your duty (as I know it will be your pleasure) to do those little things for me she has been wont to do. There is a great reason why you should stay. I want you for my wife. I will not say I love you as I loved her who shall henceforth be nameless, but I esteem you, I have a great and true affection for you. Ada, will you stay? Will you trust me?"

She turned to him with a pretty gesture.

"Rolf! Rolf!" she said, and clung about him, weeping for very joy.

At last the faithful love of so many weary years had met its reward.

So there were two weddings in lieu of one, and Yolande dressed her father's bride, despite all her remonstrances.

"He will be proud of you," she said, gently, and kissed Ada's cheek. "You are so pretty."

And indeed she was, despite the rapidly whitening hair and the little furrows on the once smooth brow.

Sir John Amory lived many years after his son's marriage—lived to be plagued and idolised by his son's children, lived to learn all the depth and sweetness of a daughter's love; and when at last they laid him to rest no one mourned him more sincerely than she who had once been his *étoile noire*.

[THE END.]

THE HEIRESS OF BEAUDESERT.

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CHAPTER V.

AN EAGER SEARCH.

"I CAN'T find Lady Valerie anywhere," said Rex Verreker, as he met Lord Beaudesert in a doorway.

"Let us suppose that someone else has been more fortunate," said the Earl, with a smile. "I am afraid that she must be staying too long in the garden, and neglecting her guests. And yet that is not like her. Do you think Dalniece is with her?"

"No; he is talking to Miss Springgold. I rather fancy that Colonel Darrell must have induced her to go out with him."

"Not likely"—shaking his head decidedly—"the fellow is an utter stranger to her, and between you and me she took the reverse of a fancy to him. Ask Miss Beck; she's sure to know."

Miss Beck, on being consulted, said she had been wondering for the last half-hour what had become of Lady Valerie, never having seen her since the second waltz after supper, when she was dancing with Mr. Verreker himself.

"You don't think the dear girl can have slipped away to bed?"

"No; I've seen her maid, and she says that she has not gone upstairs."

"Dear, dear! what can have become of her?"—in growing alarm. "She is not a flirt, like most young ladies of the present day, or else we might think she was amusing herself in a corner, but Valerie would never do such a thing as that."

"Do you happen to know where Colonel Darrell is—the man with the white face and black hair?"

A look of surprise crossed Miss Beck's shrivelled face.

"Yes; I saw him somewhere—I forget where."

"Try to remember"—with suppressed eagerness.

"I think it was in the garden"—screwing up her eyes as if to assist her memory. "Yes; I went out for a few minutes for a breath of air with Mrs. Winter, and I saw him standing just outside the conservatory door."

"I knew it!" exclaimed Verreker, abruptly. "Miss Beck, is there any man about the place whom you could trust implicitly, as you would your own father?"

"Yes, Beaumont," she answered, promptly; "but why do you ask?"

"Send him down the garden after me, toward the left"—thinking deeply; "and if he has got such a thing as a lantern, he had better bring it with him; but mind, not a word to anyone."

"But what has happened? You must tell me!" shaking with new-born anxiety.

"Nothing that I know of," with a cheerful nod; "only I am going to see for myself."

Before she could ask another question he was gone, and the poor old maid was left to palpitate, not exactly alone, for about five hundred people were gathered in the ballroom, but still without the possibility of confiding her vague alarms to any other bosom beside her own. She would have collapsed entirely if she had not been obliged to seek out Beaumont and tell him, in as matter-of-fact a tone as possible, that he was to take a lantern into the garden, and look for Mr. Verreker.

"But surely, ma'am," objected the valet, "Mr. Verreker can take care of himself, and I am particularly busy."

"I daresay you are busy, Beaumont, but I think you might put anything and everything on one side for the sake of your young mistress," with gentle reproach.

"But Mr. Verreker isn't the same as my lady; I don't understand, ma'am."

"No more do I; but, oh, dear! for goodness sake be quick. I don't know what might be happening to her," tapping the table with her old-fashioned fan in the extremity of her impatience.

"Good Lord, ma'am," his chin falling in dismay; "you don't mean to say that there's anything wrong with my lady?"

"No, no, I never said there was; but," hesitatingly, "I can't say there isn't."

The valet, a short man, with an intelligent face, and fair whiskers, shot a shrewd glance at the elderly lady, and said, respectfully—

"Then I'm to take a lantern and look for Mr. Verreker, who probably won't want to be found?"

"But he told me to send you. Oh, Beaumont, I must trust you," clasping her thin hands together. "We can't find Lady Valerie, and we're afraid that a horrid man, Colonel Darrell, has got hold of her!"

"I'll be after her like a shot, ma'am," said Beaumont, hurrying to the door; "but her ladyship has plenty of spirit, and she'll soon send him about his business if he annoys her!"

"Of course she would!" murmured Miss Beck to herself. "As to that young Verreker, I can't understand him. I was a goose to be frightened," and she returned to the drawing-room somewhat consoled by her reflections.

But when half-an-hour passed away and there was no sign of either Lady Valerie or Verreker, the old maid's anxiety returned, and she could scarcely retain her composure.

Miss Springgold came up to her leaning on Lord Marshall's arm, and begged her to give her love and say good-bye to Lady Valerie, as she could not wait for her any longer, adding with a mischievous smile: "Don't let her make Mr. Verreker forget that he is engaged to us for to-morrow."

"Mr. Verreker's memory is in his own charge, and Lady Valerie will have no wish to interfere with it," and Miss Beck drew herself up stiffly, for she disapproved highly of the pretty little coquette.

"Then I wish she wouldn't keep him out in the garden for half the evening," with a silvery laugh.

"I only wish she had," said Miss Beck, incansolously; "for then, at least, I should know that she was in safe hands."

"I hope there is no doubt as to that," said Lord Marshall, quickly.

Miss Beck gave him a glance, in which her trouble and anxiety were plainly betrayed, but she tried to answer carelessly,—

"No, of course not; only I am so afraid that she is tiring herself."

Miss Springgold wished her good-bye and turned away, because she had caught sight of her father in the doorway.

Lord Marshall put on her soft white wrapper and handed her into the carriage, then came back in pursuit of Miss Beck.

He found her standing at a window, looking out with eager eyes at the gardens.

She laid her thin hand timidly on his arm, and the colour rose in her withered cheeks.

"Do you know anything against Colonel Darrell?"

"That's an odd question," with a short laugh. "Do you know that the fellow's supposed to be my friend?"

"Yes; but you mayn't be fond of him."

"No reason why I should tell tales. Come, Miss Beck, what do you take me for?"

"Oh, never mind," shaking her head impatiently; "only tell me, would you think him a safe friend for a young innocent girl?"

"Safe! No. I could never say he was that."

"I know it," with a groan. "Then go after him, if you're a Christian; he's in the garden somewhere, and bring him away, or send him off."

"But, my dear lady, I can't warn him off like a bobby. He won't contaminate the roses!"

"Oh, how dull you are! Didn't I tell you that Lady Valerie was with him?"

"No, you never said a word about it," laughing good-humouredly. "My partner's gone away, so I'll go and interrupt the flirtation."

He stepped out on to the terrace, and wandered leisurely towards the steps which led on to the upper lawn, wondering what "devil's work" his quondam friend was up to.

The hall was nearly over, and, as is often the case, an old favourite waltz was asked for at the end, and the band struck up "Sweetheart."

"Love for a day, a week, a year;

But, alas, for the love that loves away."

The words rang in Rex Verreker's head as he strode swiftly along the smooth gravel path.

Was it the love "that lives away" which made the blood run so tumultuously through his veins at the thought of Lady Valerie in the power of that mysterious man—or was it only the old friendship and tenderness which he had felt two years ago for the pretty little girl, who was the only child of his friend?

He did not know; he could only hope that he was not such a desperate fool as to fix his heart on the heiress of Beaudesert—as well cry for the moon, or ask for the hand of an Empress.

No, he did not love her, but he was resolved to protect her, to stand between her and that other man who, if he had wealth and many other worldly advantages, would yet bring her, assuredly, a marriage-portion of woe.

Where was she?

He stood still, uncertain in which direction to proceed, and perceived Beaumont at a little distance with a dark lantern in his hand.

He beckoned to him to come nearer, and the two men held a brief consultation.

"If he has taken her through the gate that would mean real mischief, and my lady would never give in to that," objected the valet.

"No, but he might make her," said Rex to himself, as he turned away with an impatient sigh. "Well, you think there is more chance of finding them on the slopes. Then you had better take the lower walk, and I the upper."

"As you please, sir," waiting for Verreker to lead the way.

Valerie's fate hung in the balance whilst Rex hesitated, some instinct telling him, against his

better reason, that she had passed through either of her own free will, or against it.

Beaumont, in a fidget about his mistress, sacrificed politeness and walked away.

Rex gave a last searching glance at the wealth of flowers all around, as if Lady Valerie were a runaway child, capable of hiding behind a rose-bush, and then he turned away, and to any angel who might be watching it seemed as if the girl's last hope had gone.

But, providentially, as he turned, his foot struck against something in the path, and, stooping to see what it was, he picked up the diamond star which he had last seen twinkling amongst her sunny brown curls.

With a sudden impulse he kissed it passionately, then drew a deep breath.

A terror came over him as it flashed across him, if the star had fallen from her head she must have stood where he was standing, and that was close to the gate into the park.

If she had yielded to that man's persuasions, where was she now?

He made a sign to Beaumont, and, showing him what he had found, said they had better try the wood first.

They separated, taking different paths, each a prey to engrossing anxiety, which they would not betray to one another.

Although it was daylight in the open, under the trees it was as dark as night; and Beaumont, in order to discover the path, had often to make use of his lantern. He did so with the utmost caution, taking care to shield it so that its rays should not be seen by anyone in front; but his heart nearly leapt into his mouth when its light fell on a fragment of white lace caught on a briar. He stared at it intently, then hastened after Verreker.

"It looks almost as if she had been dragged," he said, in a voice hoarse with rage.

Verreker nodded, and muttered a curse between his teeth, as he returned to the path which Beaumont had just quitted, for it was evidently on the right track.

"Let me only catch him!" he murmured, as he clenched his fist, and hurried on, stumbling over roots and tangled stems in hot haste, praying to Heaven that he might not be too late, for he recollected that the station was close at hand, and, like a revelation, it flashed across him that Darrell meant to carry his victim off by train.

"Oh! Heaven, if I come too late!"

A glimmer of daylight breaking through the trees, something white crouching down by the stile—a hoarse cry came from his fevered lips, and he crashed through the briars like a tiger bounding on its prey, only Rex Verreker had come, not to destroy, but to save!

CHAPTER VI.

LOVE AGAINST FATE.

"LADY VALERIE!"

Panting and breathless he stood before her, scarcely knowing what to say or do, as she sat on the lowest step of the stile, her pale face veiled to him with a kind of dreamy eagerness in her eyes, like those of one who is roused from heavily drugged sleep by the voice of him she loves.

Her beautiful dress was all dragged and spoilt, the roses withered or fallen, and over her head years might have passed with their burden of care and sorrow, so great was the change since the evening of the day before.

"What are you doing here?" he said, gently, whilst Beaumont waited discreetly under the shadow of the trees, ready for any emergency that might offer. "Your father has been asking for you, and I've come to fetch you."

She raised her hands, as if asking him to take her, but her lips were dumb.

The gesture went to his heart, in its childish appeal for help, and stooping low he raised the little hands to his lips.

A quiver ran through her frame, a slight tinge of pink returned to her cheeks, and staggering to her feet she clung to his arm.

He looked down upon her with all the pas-

sionate tenderness of his heart shining from his blue eyes. What has cowed the brave young spirit? what had become of the pride and the reserve which had kept the warmest admirers at a distance? Instinctively he knew that he might take her to himself, and make her his own for ever. One kiss on those trembling lips, and Valerie de Montfort would never draw back from the pledge that it implied; but the honour of a true gentleman raised a barrier between them, and it was with the utmost respect that he drew her hand through his arm.

"We must make haste," he said softly. "Can you walk, or may I carry you?"

She looked back over her shoulder, her eyes wide with terror, whilst her grasp tightened on his arm.

He followed the direction of her eyes, and saw Colonel Darrell with folded arms leaning on the top of the stile.

At the sight of him he felt half choked with rage, but for the sake of Lady Valerie he strove his best to be calm.

"You shall answer for this, sir," he said hoarsely.

"Answer for what?" with a cold smile. "Considering you are a perfect stranger, you are talking rather oddly."

"Oddly or not, I mean what I say. My name is Rex Verreker, and you will find me at the Castle if you want me."

"Take me away," and Lady Valerie, shaking from head to foot, hid her face on his coat.

"I will at once," his expression softening.

"Stay!" said Colonel Darrell, imperiously.

"Lady Valerie came here unasked, and she shall decide for herself if she will go with you or me."

Verreker's lip curled disdainfully. "Do you think she would hesitate for a moment?"

"Stand back, and let her decide for herself."

"She has decided, and asked me to take her."

"Let her stand alone, or I shall think you pretend to more certainty than you feel," with an evil smile.

Determined to prove that Valerie could have no feeling for Darrell except disgust, Verreker gently unloosed her clinging fingers, and stood back as desired.

Darrell folded his arms and said nothing, but bent the whole force of his mysterious eyes upon the girl's trembling figure.

Verreker watched her with drawn breath.

Slowly she raised her drooping head, and made a step forward, not towards him, but towards Darrell! Her face was deathly pale, her chest heaving, and one hand was pressed to her heart. Evidently her mind was tortured, and her will kept in subjection by one that was stronger than her own.

Beaumont had drawn nearer, attracted by overwhelming curiosity. He looked from one to the other, saw Verreker frowning and Darrell smiling, while his young mistress hovered between the two! What could be the meaning of it all he was at a loss to imagine, but he was ready to interfere at a moment's notice if he made out anything against his master's interest.

All eyes were fixed upon the slender girlish figure standing with ruffled hair and anxious, dreamy eyes in the light of the early morning. Another step, and she was nearer still to Darrell.

He sprang over the stile, and stood with open arms, as if ready to receive her.

Slowly she came towards him, hesitating every now and then as if there were some other influence at work, which half restrained his power, but gradually drawing nearer till she was almost in his arms.

Then Verreker, half mad with rage, sprang forward and placed himself before her.

Darrell shouted,—

"Unfair! You have broken the conditions!"

But Verreker did not heed him.

Valerie stopped short with a little cry, then fell forward in a dead faint.

Rex caught her to his breast, and then, with a sob in his throat, lifted her in his strong arms and carried her off to the shelter of the trees.

Darrell followed, in spite of Beaumont's efforts to detain him.

Valerie lay like a broken lily on the grass, her head supported by Verreker's shoulder.

He wiped the teardrops off her soft white cheeks with his own pocket-handkerchief, his heart nearly bursting with rage and love, whilst Colonel Darrell looked down on the pair with his cold, sardonic smile.

"You are fighting against fate," he said, gravely.

"Fate be hanged!" was the scornful answer. "A man makes his own life, and fate has nothing to do with it."

"Was it chance that brought me here yesterday evening?"

"Chance or Providence, and I don't think you've much to do with the latter."

"I class the two together and call them fate; and so will you when you stand at the altar without a bride, when you call for Lady Valerie and she will not answer, when you look for her high and low, only to find her at last under my roof."

Verreker laid the girl's head softly on a bed of moss; then springing to his feet rushed at Darrell with clenched fists. Colonel Darrell parried the assault, and tried to keep his assailant at a distance; but Verreker, wild with rage at the insults to Lady Valerie, meant to do him some bodily harm, and closed with him at once.

The two men swayed backwards and forwards. Beaumont, who was now kneeling beside his young mistress, but enjoying the sight immensely, gave vent every now and then to words of encouragement, and involuntarily uttered a shout of joy when Darrell came with a heavy crash on the grass.

"Now," said Verreker, standing over him with heaving chest, "will you have the goodness to apologise for what you have said?"

Darrell picked himself up slowly, and wiped the blood from his forehead before answering.

"No," he said, doggedly, "I won't withdraw a word of it, for it was all true!"

"It is a lie, and you know it!" with flashing eyes.

"You have beaten me, and so you think you have a right to insult me; but fight me with my own weapons—"

"What's all this!" exclaimed a cheery voice, and Lord Marshall stepped forward, an astonished spectator of the scene. "Pon my soul, I believe you were meditating a melodramatic meeting with pistols for two and brandy for four. Ha, ha! Darrell, my dear fellow, you can't try your favourite game over here. Common sense and an English jury won't stand it."

"All I can say is that, common sense and an English jury notwithstanding, I am ready if he wants me," said Verreker, haughtily.

Then he turned his back on Darrell, and kneeling down by Valerie, asked her gently if she thought she could walk.

To his delight she said, softly,—

"Yes, if you will take me."

He helped her to rise, then gave her his arm, motioned to Beaumont to keep close, and, taking no notice of the others, led her slowly through the wood.

Darrell looked up, saw that she was gone, and hurried in pursuit.

"Valerie!" he said, hoarsely, as he planted himself in the middle of the path, "you are mine to-day—you are mine for ever. Whenever I call you, you must come."

The poor girl shook as if with sudden palsy, and her knees knocked together; but before Verreker could speak a word Lord Marshall ran up, and laid his hand on Darrell's arm.

"Don't be a brute! Try any nonsense on Lady Valerie de Montfort, and I will make England too hot to hold you. Lady Valerie, make yourself quite happy; he will never bother you again."

"Never!" her lovely eyes raised to his in the most fervent entreaty.

"Never!" Take my word for it."

"And mine, too," said Verreker, eagerly.

"He shall not come near you as long as there's breath in my body."

"Lady Valerie, these gentlemen are very ready to answer for me, but Louis Darrell is in the habit of acting for himself. Whatever they say, we shall meet again; and whilst I am away from you you will see me in your dreams. Good-bye for the present."

With a low bow and a sinister smile he disappeared into the wood; and Lady Valerie for the second time lay a motionless figure in Rex Verreker's arms, with a pitiful expression of terror on her white face.

CHAPTER VII.

WHAT DID IT COME FROM?

CONSTERNATION spread through the whole county of Berkshire when it was announced in the local journal that the Lady Valerie de Montford, only daughter of the Earl of Beadesert, was at death's door.

Carriage after carriage drove up to the castle full of anxious inquirers after the heiress of Beadesert's health, and nearly all went away in sorrow and dismay to find that the report was no worse than the truth; for the widower's only child—the one sunbeam of his shadowed life—was stricken down by a terrible fever of the brain.

"Brain-fever!" exclaimed the Marchioness of Daintree. "Why, the child has never had a care in her life! These country practitioners always like to have a grand name for every disease. I dare say it is nothing worse than an attack of measles, caught from a child the other night. In my time it was not considered the proper thing for the mistress of the house on the night of a ball to pass half the night in the garden!"

"I should have seen no harm in it," objected her son, "if she had allowed me to be her companion."

Then he pulled his straw-coloured moustaches and sauntered off to the stables to have a look at his horse, wondering if Flosie Springgold meant what she said when she told him that strength, and not beauty, was the quality she most admired in a man, and thinking every now and then, with a touch of pity, of the gentle girl with the wistful eyes, who had dared to prefer a simple commoner to a marquess with a rent-roll of half-a-million.

It was always the case—those whom he most admired would have nothing to say to him, whilst those whom he appreciated less had too much.

Nature had given him a short, ungainly form, a plain face, and a heart that was worth its weight in gold.

Flosie Springgold would be content to take possession of it for the sake of those princely revenues, but she would be sure to do her best to break it, being totally unable to guess its real value.

Even now, as she lay in a graceful attitude on the sofa in her little boudoir at Scarsdale Park, waiting for Rex Verreker to keep his promise, she was wondering what her father, Colonel Springgold, would say to the idea of his little daughter carrying off the best match in the county.

What a triumph she would have over all her girlish contemporaries! One had married a country doctor, and settled down contentedly into insignificance; another thought herself quite a swell because her husband was a Baronet, and a third had thrown out hints that one day, not very far distant, there was every chance of her becoming a Viscountess.

As Marchioness of Daintree she would far outshine them all, and any one of them would be delighted, in spite of past flirtations, to call her her dearest friend.

She lay back on the cushion, her pale gold hair contrasting well with the dark blue velvet, and fancied herself in a long train of satin and lace, with a plume of feathers and a diamond coronet, outshining all the other ladies at the Queen's drawing-room, or else standing in one of the beautiful reception-rooms at Daintree Hall, with the Marquis by her side, and a crowd of brilliant guests passing before her.

Her heart throbbed with excitement and gra-

tified vanity, but the next moment her eye fell on the dancing-card lying on her lap. She saw the R. V. inscribed in a well-known hand against one of the best waiters, and she knew that in spite of riches and splendour she would never have any happiness unless both were shared by Rex Verreker. And the faithless creature had forgotten his promise!

No doubt he was flirting with that precious little fool, Lady Valerie, a girl who had countless advantages, and did not know how to make use of one of them. She had lovely eyes, but had not learnt their power; she had a position as high as anyone else's in the whole county, yet she made her friends amongst the most insignificant people around her; she had exquisite jewels, and left them in her dressing-case.

"Poor child!" she said to herself, with a curling lip; "she is so absurdly innocent. I can't think what Rex can find to say to her. If he ventured to talk as he does to me I fancy those large eyes would open, and the conversation collapse. I wish the wretch would come, and not keep me waiting all the afternoon."

The door opened, and she looked up with eager eyes; but instead of her own particular friend, her father came in, with a very grave face.

"What is the matter?" she exclaimed, in alarm. "Nothing wrong with the horses!"

"No, they're all right," with a slight smile, for he knew his daughter's weakness; "but I've been shocked to hear that Lady Valerie is seriously ill."

"Ill! nonsense. I suppose she danced herself into a headache on Tuesday night. I don't believe she was ever at a ball before."

"It's much worse than that. A sharp attack of brain fever, and they've telegraphed for Sir Timothy Draw from London."

"Good gracious!" sitting bolt upright. "I thought brain-fever generally came from something."

"Yes, overwork or a shock; but there could have been neither in this case."

"How did you hear it?"

"From Winter, at the Bench. He was quite upset; it seems the poor girl is a great favourite of his."

"I know she is; at least, she is ridiculously fond of him. I must go to Beadesert at once."

"Why should you go yourself? I can send one of the grooms with a note. Beadesert won't see you, and the old lady will be too busy."

"I must go. I wouldn't stay away from the world. If I were ill I am sure you would expect the whole county to flock to the doors."

"If they came I should wish them at Jericho," drawing her affectionately to him. "Poor Beadesert! He has nothing but this one little girl, and if anything happens to her what will become of him?"

"But nothing will—nothing can; it would be too dreadful. Order Bluebell, there's a good old dad, whilst I go and put on my habit."

"But you will be late for dinner!" objected the Colonel, who was the very soul of punctuality.

"I will ride at a pace."

"And put yourself in a fever, and your horse as well. No, no; I'll put off the dinner for half-an-hour, but don't keep me waiting."

Flosie knew how to be quick when she had a reason for speed, and in not more than a quarter of an hour she was riding away from home at a smart trot, followed by a groom—a trim little figure on her spirited bay mare, the sun shining on the plaits of her yellow hair.

The summer was in all its glory, the golden corn ripening with full promise for the harvest, the roses blooming in every cottage-garden, and there was an air of peace and plenty wherever her eye chanced to wander.

Before long she entered one of the park gates, and proceeding along the banks of the Wythe admired the lovely scenery on either side.

Never had Beadesert looked more beautiful than now, with the long shadows of evening cast across the rippling water, and the silvery leaves of the beeches shining in the sun. Up the slopes

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by the private road, where the trees met overhead and the sunbeams seemed to be playing at bo-peep, slowly up the steep path, till she emerged on the broad gravel sweep in front of the grand portico.

The doors were wide open, but there was a hushed look about the massive building, which had a sobering effect on Flosie's spirits, and made her sink her voice to a whisper, as the footman, stationed in the hall to answer inquiries, came forward to receive her message.

The report was nearly as bad as it could be. The doctor had arrived from London, and had a consultation with the local practitioner. The remedies he prescribed had had but little effect, and the fever was very high.

Just as Flosie was wondering if there were anything more to ask Verreker crossed the hall. Her heart gave a bound, and she made a sign to him with her riding-whip.

He came out to her looking as pale and haggard as if he had been sitting up for nights and days, and she thought of how she had been expecting him to walk into her boudoir, and laugh and talk nonsense all the afternoon.

He did not look much like talking nonsense now, as he shook hands without a smile, and waited in a listless manner to be questioned.

Flosie, thoroughly taken aback, became laconic.

"Awful, isn't it?"

"Yes, bad for the Earl, poor fellow."

"But she will be better to-morrow?"

"I hope so."

"But you think so!" her blue eyes raised to his in anxious questioning.

"How can I tell!" almost fiercely.

"But what brought it on?"

He hesitated, and looked engrossed with a bundle of the reins, whilst she watched him with growing curiosity.

"It was her first ball, you know, and the excitement, or something, was too much for her."

"Something was too much for her," she repeated, quietly, but looking him straight in the face. "Of course you had nothing to do with it!"

"Of course not," shortly. "I never was of enough importance to send a woman into a fever about me."

"Then who did it?"

"Who? Why should it be anyone!" with an angry flush. "This kind of thing often happens without a reason—even doctors are puzzled to find a cause."

"And what do the doctors say it came from?" her curiosity for the moment overpowering her compassion.

"They are content to do their best to cure it, without bothering themselves about the why or the wherefore."

"If I were her father I should bother myself a good deal; but don't look so angry; I am sure I meant no harm," with a sudden change of manner. "I don't know what the time is. I was so shocked that I came off without thinking of it."

"Time!" drawing out his watch; "half-past six. You will be late for dinner."

"I don't care if I am," with a pout, because she saw that he was anxious to get rid of her. "Let me know if there is anything on earth I can do for them."

"You are very kind."

"Don't thank me in that formal manner. Is anyone staying here besides yourself?"

"Yes—Marshall."

"Good gracious! I didn't know he was a particular friend."

"No more he is; but he thought it better."

"Why, better! He can only be in the way."

"He takes care to be no nuisance to anyone but himself."

"But why should he do it!" with a puzzled air. "It must be a nuisance for himself."

"If so, he doesn't say it."

"I suppose it is no use to ask you over to Scarsdale!" looking down at him with her sweetest smile.

"No, I daren't go away. The Earl might want me."

"I should have thought he was the sort of man to shut himself up when he was unhappy."

"So he is; but he might like to know there was a friend the other side of the door."

"Well, good-bye. I shall send over the first thing to-morrow. Perhaps you will be kind enough to send a message yourself, as I do not care to trust to a report from a servant."

Rox Verraker said "Certainly," and she rode away dissatisfied with him and with everyone else, only consoled by the knowledge that she was on the track of a mystery; and if Valerie de Montford would only be kind enough to recover there might be some pleasure in unmasking it.

(To be continued.)

THE new military motor-cycle is a terrible engine of war. The machine is driven by an automatic petroleum motor, and mounts a twenty-seven pound automatic Maxim gun, capable of discharging 600 rounds per minute while travelling along at the rate of fifteen miles an hour.

It has been found that the pain caused by the sting of nettles is due partly to formic acid and partly to a chemical resembling snake-poison. Our nettles are comparatively harmless; but in India, Java, and elsewhere there are varieties the painful effects of which last weeks, and in some cases months, like snake-bites.

FACETIÆ.

"THAT bed's not long enough for me." "Well," said the waiter, "ye'll add two feet to it when you get in."

"She refused him, as she thought that he would propose again." "And did he?" "Yes, but to another girl."

BROWNE: "But he has lost one leg and both arms. How did she ever come to fancy him?" Towne: "Oh, he's a remnant."

SPOCKETT: "Do you have to be examined by a physician before you join the Wheelmen's Club?" Wheeler: "No; afterwards."

BLOBS: "I hear Jack Rapidae has been obliged to go to work at last." Slobbe: "Nothing of the kind; he's got a Government position."

MISS OLDGIRL: "It is not for lack of opportunities that I have remained single." Miss Pert: "No, I dare say you have given the men plenty of chance to propose."

TOM: "How much did the ladies realise at their fancy fair?" Dick: "I haven't heard. But I know that when I got out I realised that I hadn't a penny left."

GRIGGS: "This shirt I am wearing must be made of some indestructible material." Briggs: "Why so?" Griggs: "I have sent it to the laundry twice and it's still whole."

A MOTHER was whipping her boy, and as she applied the rod she shouted, "Will you behave!" "Yes," blubbered the throbbing boy, "I will if you will."

HE: "And you wouldn't begin a journey on Friday!" She: "Not me!" "I can't understand how you can have any faith in such a silly superstition." "No superstition about it—Saturday's pay-day."

"GIRRE," said the sweet young thing, with a side glance at her victim, "are considered emblems of conjugal bliss in China." "In China," snorted the savage bachelor, promptly, "why not the world over?"

MR. ROCKINGHAM: "What! Trust my daughter in your care for life! Never! Why, to begin with, you haven't the faintest idea of the value of money." Young Courtleigh: "I haven't, eh! What do you think I want to marry her for!"

"ALAN, take this letter to the post-office, and here's a penny to pay the postage." The six-year-old returned highly elated, and said: "Father, I saw a lot of men putting letters in a place, and when no one was looking I slipped yours in for nothing!"

"ELIZA," said a clergyman to one of his parishioners, whom he saw with her hair in curling-papers, "if Nature had designed your hair to curl, it would have curled it for you." "Is did, sir, when I was a child," was the reply; "but I suppose it thinks now that I am old enough to do it myself."

"WILL you trust me, Fanny!" he cried, passionately, grasping her hand. "With all my heart, Augustus, with all my soul, and with all myself," she whispered, nestling on his manly bosom. "Would to goodness you were my tailor," he murmured to himself, and tenderly he took her in his arms.

LADY (to little boy): "What are you crying for, my little man!" Little Boy: "My fa-father has been beat-boating me." Lady: "Well, don't cry. All fathers have to beat their little boys at times. Little Boy (yelling still more vociferously): "But my father isn't like other fa-fathers. He's in a brass be-band and be-beats the big drums."

ONE day an Irishman, when passing through a street in the city, saw in a baker's window the words "Excellent pies sold within," and he went in and bought one. He tasted it before he left the shop, and complained to the baker about its being hard and dry. The baker said: "Get away, man, I made pies before you were born." "Well," said Pat, "this must be one of them," and he left the shop in indignation.

A LITTLE girl, before going out to a tea-party was coached in conduct by a fond mamma. "You may take cake twice if it is offered you, but if you are asked a third time you must say, 'No, thank you!'" On her return home she gave assurance that she had remembered and followed the maternal instructions; "but," she added, "the servant brought the cake to me a fourth time." "And what did you say then?" inquired mamma. "Oh," was the startling rejoinder, "then I thought of what papa does sometimes, and I said, 'Take it away, and don't bother.'"

THE proprietor of a large millinery emporium told the new window-trimmer that his salary would depend on his success in making women look in at the show window. In an hour the pavement was so crowded that the proprietor could not get out. "What in the world have you done!" he asked. "Hung a piece of black velvet just inside the window." "Why should all those women crowd up to look at a piece of black velvet?" "It makes a mirror." Then the proprietor admitted that he could not pay such a man a suitable salary, so he took him into the firm.

A MUSICAL society in the suburbs was going to give a performance of an oratorio. The manager, after he had begun to figure up the expense, became doubtful of the society's ability or willingness to pay all the items. After a consultation with the director of the chorus the latter gentleman said to the leader of the orchestra, who was a professional musician: "We've got to keep down expenses, and I thought I might get you to leave out the trombones. You know, they have only four measures in the entire oratorio, and if we leave them out we can save at least £2, and no one will be any the wiser." The leader of the orchestra was extremely shocked. Assuming a tragic attitude, he exclaimed: "That would be an insult to the composer!" The chorus director reflected a moment, and then said cheerfully: "Oh, never mind him; he's dead!"

THE ORIGIN OF THE BRITISH MUSEUM LIBRARY.

IN an article on the World's Famous Libraries, appearing in the January number of the WINDSOR MAGAZINE, there is an interesting account of our great library. "The famous British Library began with a gift of some 50,000 books to the nation by Sir Hans Sloane, but became really a national library of influence when, in 1757, King George II. presented to it the priceless and immense collection of books and MSS. which had been collected by his predecessors on the throne from the time of Henry VII. onwards. These included also the library which had been Archbishop Crammer's, and those of other celebrated Englishmen of the Middle Ages. Then later, another king, George the Fourth, gave to the British Museum Library the magnificent collection of works which his father, George III., had spent his life in getting together at a cost of over £200,000. This noble gift of the year 1823 was followed by that of the Right Honourable Thomas Grenville, in 1846, which consisted of over 20,000 volumes. And by the law which provides that a copy of every work entered at Stationers' Hall shall be presented to this library, the famous collection of books at the British Museum is ever increasing by leaps and bounds. The immense reading room, when it is well filled with readers, is a sight worth seeing. The absolute stillness and air of studious interest which pervades the whole of this great apartment cannot fail to strike the most careless observer. The long rows of shelving, miles upon miles of it, filled with the 1,500,000 volumes that the library now boasts, are a never failing source of wonder. And one's admiration is the more increased when it is remembered that so perfectly is the whole catalogued that the librarians or their assistants can find any book required almost at a moment's notice! In this respect, at least, our great library stands unique amongst the biggest libraries of the world."

SOCIETY.

It is much hoped in Germany that her Majesty will pay a visit to the Kaiser and Kaiserin at Potsdam towards the end of April; but nothing at all of a definite nature seems yet to be known.

If the Queen returns from Bordighera through Germany in the spring and meets the Imperial Family she will confer the Order of the Garter on the young Crown Prince, her great grandson. The Prince attains his legal majority on May 8th, and the Emperor William was of the same age when the Queen created him a Knight of the Garter in 1877.

The Queen of Portugal is engaged in the work of translating *Hamlet* into Portuguese.

The King and Queen of Roumania are to leave Bucharest to spend two or three months at Abbade, on the Austrian Riviera, directly the Crown Prince and Crown Princess return home from their visit to the Duke and Duchess of Coburg at Coburg.

The Emperor William has sent a formal invitation to the Prince of Wales, the Duke of Connaught, and the Duke of York for the annual Chapter of the Order of the Black Eagle, which is to be held at the Schloss, Berlin, about the 27th of this month. The Duke of Coburg and the Grand Duke of Hesse are going to Berlin to attend this function.

As at present arranged, the German Emperor will be at Cowes next summer, and will, in all probability, be accompanied by the Empress and some of their children, but this must not be taken in the light of a visit to the Queen. Their Majesties will live on board the *Hohenzollern*, their private apartments (no other word would describe the accommodation) being far superior to those on the *Victoria* and *Albert* or the *Osborne*, or, indeed, to those on the Queen's new yacht which has taken so long to build at Pembroke Dockyard. The nursery is a conspicuous feature on the *Hohenzollern*, and all the Imperial children, even in number, could be provided with separate rooms.

No family in England, probably, makes a point of observing birthdays more than that of the Sovereign. The Queen herself never forgets any member, near or distant, and the younger members of the Connaught and Battenberg families are trained to kindly remembrance of those about them, and in their parents' service, as well as of their relatives. Not long since, Princess Eoa was very busy working an embroidered cloth, which was duly presented to her godmother, the Empress Eugénie, on her birthday; and Princess Henry of Battenberg and Princess Christian are both fond of "making" their gifts. On the Duke of Connaught's last birthday Her Majesty gave him a large oil-painting of herself.

DURING the last few months a new approach has been made to the Royal vault, in order to facilitate the visits of the Royal Family, and the interior has been lighted by electricity, while an altar has been placed at the upper end. The old coffins covered with crimson velvet, with gold ornaments and mountings, have all been enclosed in oak cases, and they are now placed on the shelves at the sides of the vault. Until within the last few weeks the large stone table in the centre of the vault was covered with the coffins of George III., Queen Charlotte, and the Duke of Kent. This vault was constructed by George III. as a burial-place for himself and his wife and their descendants. The last interment was that of the Duchess of Teck. The old Royal vault, in which Henry VIII. and Charles I. are buried, is underneath the choir of St. George's Chapel. There is something very pathetic in the brief entry in the chapel register which records the burial of the "Royal Martyr." It simply consists of five words, with the date, "King Charles, from the Castle."

STATISTICS.

THE human voice, in a few cases, utter 296 words a minute.

ENGLAND consumes £8,000,000 worth of fish every year.

THERE are said to be quite 200,000,000 copies of the Bible scattered throughout the world.

THE shipyards of Great Britain, all working together, could turn out a big steamship every day of the year.

THE driest of all fishes is, perhaps, the river eel; yet, according to an analysis by a German chemist, 60 per cent. of its substance is water. Salmon comes next, with 61.4 per cent.

GEOGRAPHICAL statistics show that fifty-two volcanic islands have risen out of the sea since the beginning of the century. Nineteen of that number have since disappeared, and ten are now inhabited.

GEMS.

THE golden moments in the stream of life rush past us, and we see nothing but sand; the angels come to visit us, and we only know them when they are gone.

THIS way upward from the lowest stage through every other to the highest; that is, the way of development, so far from lowering us to the brute level, is the only way for us to attain the true highest—namely, the all-complete.

THE only conclusive evidence of a man's sincerity is that he gives himself for a principle. Words, money, all things else are comparatively easy to give away; but when a man makes a gift of his daily life and practice, it is plain that the truth, whatever it may be, has taken possession of him.

THAT pleasure is low which tends to belittle the nature; that one is high which tends to enlarge it. That art is low which stimulates only the feelings and ideas most apt to brutalize—that is, to restrict and narrow—for that is the distinction between brute and man, the one little, the other large in powers and possibilities. That art is high which awakens feelings and ideas that are vital with tendencies toward more and still more of attainment and being.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

APPLE JAM.—To each pound of apple pulp add the strained juice of a lemon, the grated rind of half a Seville orange, and three-quarters of a pound of castor sugar. Stir, and simmer for fifteen minutes. Put the jam into pots, and tie them down the following day with parchment covers.

MARMALADE TARTLETS.—Mix two ounces bread-crumbs and two tablespoonfuls marmalade in a pint boiling milk: beat up three eggs, melt two ounces butter, and add all to the milk, &c., with sugar to taste. Line patty pans with short crust, then half fill with this mixture, and bake till set, and the pastry is done. Sift castor sugar over, and serve.

GINGERBREAD.—One pound flour, one teaspoonful soda, six ounces butter, one teaspoonful ginger, six ounces sugar, one teaspoonful mixed spice, half-pound treacle, about one teaspoonful buttermilk, three eggs, quarter-pound peel, two teaspoonfuls caraway seeds; put flour, sugar, orange, soda and spices into a basin and mix them; then melt the treacle and butter, and stir them in; beat up the eggs and stir them in; cut the peel up and add it and the carraways; after that stir in as much buttermilk as makes it moist and easily stirred; pour into a tin, and bake it in a moderate oven.

MISCELLANEOUS.

THERE are certain flowers the perfume of which is produced by microbes.

WOMEN are not permitted to be photographers in China.

MOST of the theatres in Melbourne are equipped with billiard-rooms.

It has been discovered that the bark of the acacia tree, which will grow in almost any soil, is an excellent tanning material.

THE western part of Persia is inhabited by a species of camel which is the pigmy of its kind. It is snow-white, and only five feet high.

Two churches possess trees growing within their walls; one is at Rose, the other at Kempsey, in Worcester.

THE town in England best provided with places of worship is the ancient one of Rochdale, where there are 145 churches and chapels.

THE viper is the only poisonous snake known in Europe, and it is found in every part of the Continent, as well as in England.

THE wood of the redwood tree never decays, it is said, and fallen trunks which have been overgrown by old forests are as solid as the day they fell.

IN Zante, one of the Ionian Islands, there is a petroleum spring which has been known for nearly three thousand years. It is mentioned by Herodotus.

THERE are parts of Spain where the hat is unknown, except in pictures. The men, when they need a covering, tie up their heads, and the women use flowers.

FROM an interpretation of a passage in the Koran, Moslems are forbidden to have shades to their eyes, hence the absence of the peak both from the fez and the turban.

ELECTRICITY has been applied to the manufacture of glass. A pot of glass can be melted in fifteen minutes which by the old process would require thirty hours.

AT a marriage ceremony in Japan, neither the bride nor the groom wears any clothing of a purple colour, lest their marriage should be soon dissolved, purple being a colour most likely to fade.

ON an average, the River Thames is completely frozen over three times a century. When this happened formerly a great Frost Fair was invariably held on the frozen river near London Bridge.

A NEW medicine-spoon has lately been invented. On its handle is a dial about the size of a shilling, upon which are engraved numbers. There is a little indicator in the centre, to show when the next food or medicine is to be administered.

THE fruit of the nutmeg resembles a pear in appearance, and when ripe, opens and displays the nut covered with a red coating of mace. The nuts are husked, and partially roasted over a slow fire until all the moisture is extracted. When cooled they are ready for sale.

THEATRES in Spain have no programmes. A bill in the lobby sometimes gives the cast, but most of the actors remain unknown by name. The curtain is devoted to advertisements, and in Madrid theatres advertising-cards are affixed with the numbers on the back of each seat.

It has been found that the pain caused by the sting of nettles is due partly to formic acid and partly to a chemical resembling snake-poison. Our nettles are comparatively harmless; but in India, Java, and elsewhere, there are varieties the painful effects of which last weeks.

IN Egypt, on the River Nile, as well as in Italy, on the Po, the custom of travelling for bee pasturage has been continued from the remotest ages to the present time, as there is about seven weeks' difference in the vegetation on the upper and lower Nile. They use large flat-boats holding from sixty to one hundred hives of bees, and float slowly along as the vegetation advances. The sinking of the boat to a certain depth in the water indicates when they have filled the hives with honey.

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

ARTIST.—Scarlet uniform with blue facings.
H. E.—It is registered at Stationers' Hall, E.C.
MAGNET.—You must consult a book on magnetism.
PATRIOT.—The "g" in Kruger is pronounced hard.
ROBBER.—You are responsible for your wife's support.
ALFRED'S PET.—Presents between lovers are regulated by taste.
PEN.—"Penelope" is pronounced as a word of four syllables.
CELIA.—It is not considered "good form," but you can do so.
JACK.—John is the most common Christian name in England.
IGNORANT.—The proper pronunciation of the name is Drayfuss.
LITTLE ENGLANDER.—Reserves were called out in 1878, 1882, and 1886.
BRIDE.—If possible, dry in the open air, but upon no account near the fire.
W. O.—Widow is entitled to one-third only and child or children to remainder.
CLARENCE.—A seaman in the navy cannot rise above the rank of warrant officer.
ONE IN GAIR.—The imprisonment does not inflict any stigma upon the child.
BRITANNIA.—The volunteers and yeomanry are generally enlisted for home service only.
ANXIOUS HUB.—You are not liable for a debt incurred by your wife before marriage.
OLD READER.—If the woman leaves no will, her husband succeeds to her effects.
D. B.—The property is divided equally between the surviving children of both wives.
TROUBLED.—We cannot give a remedy to effect a cure when unacquainted with the cause.
YOUNG AND SO FAIR.—Vitrified does not burn if wiped off the skin at once with a dry cloth.
IN DEBT.—You are only liable to the extent of anything you inherited from your father.
ANXIETY.—The voyage to the Cape on the fast steamer takes about seventeen days.
SOLICIT'S MOTHER.—Tombola or Tombola, in Zululand. Killed, 1877, dated 22nd Jan., 1879.
ONE IN DUB.—If you express doubt as to first ceremony you can doubtless arrange a fresh one.
ROCK'S REACTION.—There is no ground for action if the engagement was broken off by mutual consent.
CONTRACT REAP.—Consult a responsible lawyer. He can tell you just exactly what steps are necessary.
WARRIOR BOYS.—Colonel Burnaby was killed at the battle of Abu Kira, in the Sudan, on January 17th, 1885.
FORGIVEN.—The conditions for a foreigner to become a naturalised Englishman are five years' residence and a fee of 25.
MUNICAL.—Practice is indispensable to succeed in the study of music, without which the most striking talent will not suffice.
N. A.—The trifling error in the Christian name would not invalidate a right to the property, as an identification would suffice.
ACCUSE THE SEA.—The one "occupation for women which is least sought after" in the colonies, as at home, is domestic service.
RED, WHITE AND BLUE.—The employment of poisonous gases in shells or bullets would be contrary to the laws of civilized warfare.
PUZZLED.—The expression "on the frontier" means sufficiently near the dividing line to defend it or to readily pass over it.
AMUSEMENT.—Join some amateur company, where you will learn to walk the stage, and have opportunities for studying elocution, &c.
ALICE.—This question is much debated at present. The generally accepted opinion is that the present year is the first of a new century.
VOCAL.—Exercise it regularly, but do not attempt to force it until after your twenty-first year. You may then safely try what it is capable of.
MAGNET.—Vaseline is best. Rub a very little well in with a soft cloth, and polish with a second cloth till every suspicion of greasiness is removed.
STUDENT.—Certainly it is a great mistake to suppose that those who are engaged in brain work require less food than those whose labour is manual.
MIRROR.—This can be done at home, but you will find it a difficult and costly process, and you had much better get it done in the trade. Common glass would answer, but better use plate glass.
O. T. T.—The address you think fit to give to the Patent Office is the one they accept as yours; they have no knowledge of any other, and are not entitled to the explanation that it is in reality a friend's.

S. P. Y.—You must write to the Registrar-General of Shipping, Custom House, London, in order to obtain the precise date and locality of the wreck.

ENTHUSIAST.—In proportion to population, the little Republic of Switzerland can boast of having a larger army than any other nation in the world.

CURIOS.—The last day of the nineteenth century will be December 31st, 1900, and so the first day of the twentieth century will be January 1st, 1901.

FIREWORKS.—A cashmere shawl does not depreciate with age; its colouring on the contrary, becomes toned by time, and gains a beautiful mellowness.

W. S.—Sponge at once lightly with clean cold water, and when dry iron on the wrong side with a warm—not hot—iron, and the stains should be a thing of the past.

SUPERFLUITY.—The electric needle burns out the roots of the hairs in much the same way as gunpowder blows out the roots of trees when a forest is being cleared.

MARRIED BEAUTY.—You must on no account attempt to remove moles from your face; the result would almost certainly be to induce eczema and disfigure your countenance hopelessly.

ANXIOUS TO BE MARRIED.—Marriages contracted through advertising are not very likely to turn out happy; indeed there is every reason why they should be otherwise.

HOUARI, &c.—Iron and steel goods can be safely stored without fear of rust, if before wrapping them in paper they are wiped over with a cloth moistened with paraffin.

DEBILITY.—In marriage there is no disparity between a husband aged thirty-five and a wife twenty-six years. At those ages their tempers are most likely to harmonize.

AN OLD READER.—Rips tomatoes will remove almost any kind of stain from the hands, and they can also be used to great advantage on white cloth, removing ink spots as well as many others.

IN DISTRESS.—The husband would have to pay the costs of a divorce, if a *divorce nisi* were obtained. You could sue *in forma pauperis*; but even then some small fees would have to be met.

GONE.

"CAN you not see how I have missed you, dearest, How I regret I ever gave you pain, How even then I held you first and nearest? O Love, if you could only come again!"

I would be kinder to you, I was truthful: Life had so much that was too hard to bear; I did not understand how, self-forgetful, Your love had lightened every pain or care.

We grew too sure of those who never give us A single anxious thought; they are our own. I did not dream that death would dare to rob me, Until I found my priceless treasure gone."

WORRIED.—You can keep the lodger's goods as security, until he pays his debt; but should you sell them and be wiser than to offer to pay you would be liable for the full value of the goods.

M. O. I.—The following lotion will generally remove freckles if used for a considerable length of time: Few drops lemon and lemon-juice, one ounce each; rose water, one pint.

DUROR.—The letters P.R.O. inscribed on a visiting-card mean that the person is about leaving the neighbourhood; they are the initials for the French words, *pour prendre congé*, "to take leave."

PAVING.—A novel way to make sandwiches is to use horseradish grated while fresh instead of mustard. Spread it in a thin layer upon each buttered slice, and the result will be found an appetizing surprise.

BREK.—All carriages should be washed, both outside and inside, with hot soapy water, rinsed in clean hot water, and wiped dry with a clean cloth. A soapy or greasy drench should never be used for this purpose.

ANXIOUS CARRIAGE.—If the mother can prove that her son is her only support the way, on applying to the War Office, obtain his discharge; son's consent must also be given; she should get some person of influence to make the application.

SUBRAM.—To restore the colour of ivory which has become yellow, boil it for an hour in a solution of alum. Another plan is to clean it with burnt pumice-stone, powdered and moistened with a little water. Dry in the sun under glass.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURE.—You cannot prevent the brass from tarnishing if your atmosphere happens to be somewhat impure; but the gasser can be easily cleaned if taken down, washed well with good warm soap and water, then rubbed dry and hung up again.

FEARFULLY ANXIOUS.—The proverb, "Every bullet has its billet," is said to have originated in a superstition common among soldiers fifty years back that their name was written on the bullet that stretched them dead.

REGULAR READER.—Your best chance of finding out whether it is the case will be to take her to a good teacher of singing, and let him try her voice. She would, of course, have to devote all her time and attention to study if she wished to be successful.

BURNER.—Wash the shelves and walls with strong chloride of lime, and then sprinkle into crevices and over the shelves insect powder. This treatment gets rid of them. But the chloride of lime cannot be used without danger while meat or other food is in the place; therefore, if you wish to try it, remove all food till the cure is effected.

CHARLES.—In order to remove stains from engravings or drawings, take or powdered magnesia is spread either directly on the stains or on white filtering paper placed on the stains. Damp the substance with commercial peroxide of hydrogen (oxygenated water), and leave it for some hours; then brush it away. Coffee and wine stains on plans or drawings completely vanish, without any danger to the lines of the work.

FLORA.—The usual way to extract the perfume of flowers is to gather the flowers and put them in the sun in pans, cover them with sweet oil, unsalted butter, or purified lard. Add fresh rose leaves or other blooms to the grease every day. When it has become saturated with the perfume, put the oil or grease in a bottle and fill the bottle with alcohol or spirits of wine, which will eat up the grease, but spare the perfume. Later it has been found that odours can be extracted by immersing the flowers in pure water, and afterwards isolating the perfume from the water by means of ether.

DOMESTIC.—Curtains of really good material can generally be washed satisfactorily, provided they are put into a soapy lather and no soap is rubbed actually on them. In the case of green ones, add ox-gall to the water instead of soap. For dark silk-lined curtains grate a pound of potatoes to a pulp, add to them a pint of water, well stir, and sieve through a cone of wire. Let stand till the liquid on top is clear, pour it off gently so as not to disturb the sediment, and sponge the curtains, first with this, and afterwards with a cloth wrung out of cold water, and iron through a damp cloth. It is best to try this sponging mixture on a small corner before doing the whole outfit.

J. LOVEDAY.—Surnames were given to individuals originally as a means of distinguishing one from another when they became so numerous in a district that a mere Christian name lost its significance among them; a man's colour (Black, Brown, Gray), his trade (Smith, Gardener, Baker, Tailor), his locality (Hill, Loch, Holm), or landmark (Alken—near the little oak); in course of time, to suit individual fancy, old names have been clipped or patched, seldom with advantage to their symmetry and always to the ruin of their original significance; this is what has occurred in case of your name—a letter has been dropped from it, and now it is meaningless except as distinguishing you from others.

LOVER OF HISTORY.—It is Admirable, not Admiral, Orionton. The prefix was given because the man who bore the name was admirable in every way—the most nearly perfect of all men. He was born in Scotland in 1590. Before he was twenty he had mastered ten languages and run through the whole circle of the sciences. He had also perfected himself in athletics and in every manly accomplishment. In all the capitals of Europe he early achieved victories in disputation with learned men in all branches of human knowledge. Beside this he had wonderful beauty of person, gentleness and grace and strength. He vanquished in a contest the most famous gladiator in Europe. Yet this almost perfect creature was murdered in the streets by a drunken youngster—the son of the Duke of Mantua—to whom Orionton had been appointed a tutor.

ONE WHO WANTS ADVICE.—As a rule long engagements are a mistake; but each case must, of course, be considered on its merits. All people fall in love and pledge themselves when they are quite young, and consequently engagement must be long. In later life, however, the length of an engagement should depend to a considerable extent on the amount of knowledge of each other which the lovers previously possessed. If they had watched each other's career and known each other's disposition for years, the engagement period may very wisely be shortened; but otherwise it is certainly advisable that a sufficient time should be allowed to test the stability of the feelings of the parties toward each other and their suitability of temperament. We should make two years the outside limit of any engagement, unless the circumstances were exceptional. If people cannot marry within that time they ought not to bind themselves. We do not say that they may not come to an understanding which steps short of a real engagement, but an engagement ought to be entered upon as distinctly preliminary to marriage, and it is seldom wise or kind to make it a lengthy preliminary.

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